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THE NATURE OF A CRIME

BOOKS BY

JOSEPH CONRAD

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WITH FORD MADOX FORD (HUEFFER)

Romance: A Novel
The Inheritors: An Extravagant Story

JOSEPH CONRAD

AND

FORD MADOX FORD

(F. M. HUEFFER)

THE NATURE OF A CRIME

LAST ESSAYS

MCMXXXVIII

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THE NATURE OF A CRIME

THE NATURE OF A CRIME

I

You are, I suppose, by now in Rome. It is very curious how present to me are both Rome and yourself. There is a certain hill—you, and that is the curious part of it, will never go there—yet, yesterday, late in the evening, I stood upon its summit and you came walking from a place below. It is always midday there: the seven pillars of the Forum stand on high, their capitals linked together, and form one angle of a square. At their bases there lie some detritus, a broken marble lion, and I think but I am not certain, the bronze she-wolf suckling the two bronze children. Your dress brushed the herbs: it was grey and tenuous: I suppose you do not know how you look when you are unconscious of being looked at? But I looked at you for a long time—at my You.

I saw your husband yesterday at the club and he said that you would not be returning till the end of April. When I got back to my chambers I found a certain letter. I will tell you about it afterwards—but I forbid you to look at the end of what I am writing now. There is a piece of news coming: I would break it to you if I could—but there is no way of breaking the utterly unexpected. Only, if you read this through you will gather from the tenor, from the tone of my thoughts, a little inkling, a small preparation for my disclosure. Yes: it is a "disclosure."

. . . Briefly, then, it was this letter—a business letter—that set me thinking: that made that hill rise before me. Yes, I stood upon it and there before me lay Rome—beneath a haze, in the immense sea of plains. I have often thought of going to Rome—of going with you, in a leisurely autumn of your life and mine. Now—since I have received that letter—I know that I shall never see any other Rome than that from an imagined hilltop. And when, in the wonderful light and shadelessness of that noon, last evening, you came from a grove of silver poplars, I looked at you—*my* you—for a very long while. You had, I think, a parasol behind your head, you moved slowly, you looked up at the capitals of those seven pillars . . . And I thought that I should never—since you will not return before the end of April—never see you again. I shall never see again the you that every other man sees . . .

You understand everything so well that already you must understand the nature of my disclosure. It is, of course, no disclosure to tell you that I love you. A very great reverence is due to youth—and a very great latitude is due to the dead. For I am dead: I have only lived through you for how many years now! And I shall never speak with you again. Some sort of burial will have been given to me before the end of April. I am a spirit. I have ended my relations with the world. I have balanced all my books, my will is made. Only I have nothing to leave—save to you, to whom I leave all that is now mine in the world—my memory.

It is very curious—the world now. I walked slowly down here from Gordon Square. I walked slowly—for all my work is done. On the way I met Graydon Bankes, the K. C. It would have astonished him if he could have known how unreal he looked to me. He is six feet high, and upon his left cheek there is a brown

mole. I found it difficult to imagine why he existed. And all sorts of mists hurried past him. It was just outside the Natural History Museum. He said that his Seaford Railway Bill would come before Committee in June. And I wondered: what is June? . . . I laughed and thought: why June will never come!

June will never come. Imagine that for a moment. We have discussed the ethics of suicide. You see why June will never come!

You remember that ring I always wear? The one with a bulging, greenish stone. Once or twice you have asked me what stone it was. You thought, I know, that it was in bad taste and I told you I wore it for the sake of associations. I know you thought—but no: there has never been any woman but you.

You must have felt a long time ago that there was not, that there could not have been another woman. The associations of the ring are not with the past of a finished affection, or hate, or passion, with all these forms of unrest that have a term in life: they looked forward to where there is no end—whether there is rest in it God alone knows. If it were not bad taste to use big words in extremities I would say there was Eternity in the ring—Eternity which is the negation of all that life may contain of losses and disappointments. Perhaps you have noticed that there was one note in our confidence that never responded to your touch. It was that note of universal negation contained within the glass film of the ring. It is not you who brought the ring into my life: I had it made years ago. It was in my nature always to anticipate a touch on my shoulder, to which the only answer could be an act of defiance. And the ring is my weapon. I shall raise it to my teeth, bite through the glass: inside there is poison.

I haven't concealed anything from you. Have I?

And, with the great wisdom for which I love you, you have tolerated these other things. You would have tolerated this too, you who have met so many sinners and have never sinned . . .

Ah, my dear one—that is why I have so loved you. From our two poles we have met upon one common ground of scepticism—so that I am not certain whether it was you or I who first said: "Believe nothing: be harsh to no one." But at least we have suffered. One does not drag around with one such a cannon-ball as I have done all these years without thinking some wise thoughts. And well I know that in your dreary and terrible life you have gained your great wisdom. You have been envied; you too have thought: Is any prospect fair to those among its trees? And I have been envied for my gifts, for my talents, for my wealth, for my official position, for the letters after my name, for my great and empty house, for my taste in pictures—for my . . . for my opportunities.

Great criminals and the very patient learn one common lesson: Believe in nothing, be harsh to no one!

But you cannot understand how immensely leisurely I feel. It is one o'clock at night. I cannot possibly be arrested before eleven to-morrow morning. I have ten hours in which, without the shadow of a doubt, I can write to you: I can put down my thoughts desultorily and lazily. I have half a score of hours in which to speak to you.

The stress of every secret emotion makes for sincerity in the end. Silence is like a dam. When the flood is at its highest the dam gives way. I am not conceited enough to think that I can sweep you along, terrified, in the rush of my confidences. I have not the elemental force. Perhaps it is just that form of "greatness" that I have lacked all my life—that profound quality

which the Italians call *terribilità*. There is nothing overpowering or terrible in the confusion of a love too great to be kept within the bounds of the banality which is the safeguard of our daily life. Men have been nerved to crime for the sake of a love that was theirs. The call of every great passion is to unlawfulness. But your love was not mine, and my love for you was vitiated by that conventional reverence which, as to nine parts in ten, is genuine, but as to the last tenth a solemn sham behind which hide all the timidities of a humanity no longer in its youth. I have been of my time—altogether of my time—lacking courage for a swoop, as a bird respects a ragged and nerveless scarecrow. Altogether a man of my time. Observe, I do not say "our time." You are of all time—you are the loved Woman of the first cry that broke the silence and of the last song that shall mark the end of this ingenious world to which love and suffering have been given, but which has in the course of ages invented for itself all the virtues and all the crimes. And being of this world and of my time I have set myself to deal ingeniously with my suffering and my love.

Now everything is over—even regrets. Nothing remains of finite things but a few days of life and my confession to make to you—to you alone of all the world.

It is difficult. How am I to begin? Would you believe it—every time I left your presence it was with the desire, with the necessity to forget you. Would you believe it?

This is the great secret—the heart of my confession. The distance did not count. No walls could make me safe. No solitude could defend me; and having no faith in the consolations of eternity I suffered too cruelly from your absence.

If there had been kingdoms to conquer, a crusade to

preach—but no. I should not have had the courage to go beyond the sound of your voice. You might have called to me any time! You never did. Never. And now it is too late. Moreover, I am a man of my time, the time is not of great deeds but of colossal speculations. The moments when I was not with you had to be got through somehow. I dared not face them empty-handed lest from sheer distress I should go mad and begin to execrate you. Action? What form of action could remove me far enough from you whose every thought was referred to your existence? And as you were to me a soul of truth and serenity I tried to forget you in lies and excitement. My only refuge from the tyranny of my desire was in abasement. Perhaps I was mad. I gambled. I gambled first with my own money and then with money that was not mine. You know my connection with the great Burden fortune. I was trustee under my friend's, Alexander Burden's will. I gambled with a determined recklessness, with closed eyes. You understand now the origin of my houses, of my collections, of my reputation, of my taste for magnificence—which you deigned sometimes to mock indulgently with an exquisite flattery as at something not quite worthy of me. It was like a break-neck ride on a wild horse, and now the fall has come. It was sudden. I am alive but my back is broken. Edward Burden is going to be married. I must pay back what I have borrowed from the Trust. I cannot. Therefore I am dead. (A mouse has just come out from beneath one of the deed-boxes. It looks up at me. It may have been eating some of the papers in the large cupboard. To-morrow morning I shall tell Saunders to get a cat. I have never seen a mouse here before. I have never been here so late before. At times of pressure, as you know, I have always taken my

papers home. So that these late hours have been, as it were, the prerogative of the mouse. No. I shall not get a cat. To that extent I am still a part of the world: I am master of the fate of mice!) I have, then, ten hours, less the time it has taken me to chronicle the mouse, in which to talk to you. It is strange, when I look back on it, that in all the years we have known each other—seven years, three months and two days—I have never had so long as ten hours in which I might talk to you. The longest time was when we came back from Paris together, when your husband was in such a state that he could neither see nor hear. (I've seen him, by-the-bye, every day since you have been gone. He's really keeping away from it wonderfully well: in fact, I should say that he has not once actually succumbed. I fancy, really, that your absence is good for him in a way: it creates a new set of circumstances, and a change is said to be an excellent aid in the breaking of a habit. He has, I mean, to occupy himself with some of the things, innumerable as they are, that you do for him. I find that he has even had his passbook from the bank and has compared it with his counterfoils. I haven't, on account of this improvement, yet been round to his chemist's. But I shall certainly tell them that they *must* surreptitiously decrease the strength of it.) That was the longest time we have ever really talked together. And, when I think that in all these years I haven't once so much as held your hand for a moment longer than the strictest of etiquette demanded! And I loved you within the first month.

I wonder why that is. Fancy, perhaps. Habit perhaps—a kind of idealism, a kind of delicacy, a fastidiousness. As you know very well it is not on account of any moral scruples. . . .

I break off to look through what I have already writ-

ten to you. There is, first, the question of why I never told you my secret: then, the question of what my secret really is; I have started so many questions and have not followed one of them out to the very end. But all questions resolve themselves into the one question of our dear and inestimable relationship.

I think it has been one of the great charms of our relationship that all our talks have been just talks. We have discussed everything under the sun, but we have never discussed anything *au fond*. We have strayed into all sorts of byways and have never got anywhere. I try to remember how many evenings in the last five years we have not spent together. I think they must be less than a hundred in number. You know how, occasionally, your husband would wake out of his stupors—or walk *in* his stupor and deliver one of his astonishingly brilliant disquisitions. But remember how, always, whether he talked of free love or the improvement in the breed of carriage-horses, he always thrashed his subject out to the bitter end. It was not living with a man: it was assisting at a performance. And, when he was sunk into his drugs or when he was merely literary, or when he was away, how lazily we talked. I think no two minds were ever so fitted one into another as yours and mine. It is not of course that we agree on all subjects—or perhaps upon any. In the whole matter of conduct we are so absolutely different—you are always for circumspection, for a careful preparation of the ground, for patience; and I am always ready to act, and afterwards draw the moral from my own actions. But somehow, in the end, it has all worked out in our being in perfect agreement. Later I will tell you why that is.

Let me return to my mouse. For you will observe

that the whole question revolves, really, around that little allegorical mite. It is an omen: it is a symbol. It is a little herald of the Providence that I do not believe in—of the Providence you so implicitly seek to obey. For instinctively you believe in Providence—in God, if you will. I as instinctively disbelieve. Intellectually of course you disbelieve in a God. You say that it is impossible for Reason to accept an Overlord; I that Reason forces one to accept an Overlord; that Reason forces one to believe in an Omnipotent Ruler—only I am unable to believe. We, my dear, are in ourselves evidence of a design in creation. For we are the last word of creation. It has taken all the efforts, all the birthpangs of all the ages to evolve—you and me. And, being evolved, we are intellectually so perfectly and so divinely fashioned to dovetail together. And, physically too, are we not divinely meant the one for the other? Do we not react to the same causes: should not we survive the same hardships or succumb to the same stresses? Since you have been away I have gone looking for people—men, women, children, even animals —that could hold my attention for a minute. There has not been one. And what purer evidence of design could you ask for than that?

I have made this pact with the Providence that I argue for, with the Providence in whose existence I cannot believe—that if, from under the castle of black metal boxes, the mouse reappear and challenge death—then there is no future state. And, since I can find no expression save in you, if we are not reunited I shall no longer exist. So my mouse is the sign, the arbitrament, a symbol of an eternal life or the herald of nothingness.

I will make to you the confession that since this fancy, this profound truth, has entered my mind, I have not raised my eyes from the paper. I dread—I sup-

pose it is dread—to look across the ring of light that my lamp casts. But now I will do so. I will let my eyes travel across the bundles of dusty papers on my desk. Do you know I have left them just as they were on the day when you came to ask me to take your railway tickets? I will let my eyes travel across that rampart of blue and white dockets. . . . The mouse is not there.

But that is not an end of it. I am not a man to be ungenerous in my dealings with the Omnipotent: I snatch no verdict.

II

Last night it was very late and I grew tired, so I broke off my letter. Perhaps I was really afraid of seeing that mouse again. Those minute superstitions are curious things. I noticed, when I looked at the enumeration of these pages to-night, I began to write upon the thirteenth sheet—and that gives me a vague dissatisfaction. I read, by-the-bye, a paragraph in a newspaper: it dealt with half-mad authors. One of these, the writer said, was Zola; he was stated to be half mad because he added together the numbers on the backs of cabs passing him in the street. Personally, I do that again and again—and I know very well that I do it in order to dull my mind. It is a sort of narcotic. Johnson, we know, touched his street-posts in a certain order: that, too, was to escape from miserable thoughts. And we all know how, as children, we have obeyed mysterious promptings to step upon the lines between the paving-stones in the street. . . . But the children have their futures: it is well that they should propitiate the mysterious Omnipotent One. In their day, too, Johnson and Zola had their futures. It was well that Johnson should "touch" against the evil chance; that Zola should rest his mind against new problems. In me it is mere imbecility. For I have no future.

Do you find it difficult to believe that? You know the Burdens, of course. But I think you do not know that, for the last nine years, I have administered the Burden estates all by myself. The original trustees

were old Lady Burden and I; but nine years ago Lady Burden gave me a power of attorney and since then I have acted alone. It was just before then that I had bought the houses in Gordon Square—the one I live in, the one you live in, and the seven others. Well, rightly speaking, those houses have been bought with Burden money, and all my pictures, all my prints, all my books, my furniture, my reputation as a connoisseur, my governorship of the two charities—all the me that people envy—have been bought with the Burden money. I assure you that at times I have found it a pleasurable excitement. . . . You see, I have wanted you sometimes so terribly—so terribly that the juggling with the Burden accounts has been as engrossing a narcotic as to Zola was the adding up of the numbers upon the backs of cabs. Mere ordinary work would never have held my thoughts.

Under old Burden's will young Edward Burden comes of age when he reaches the age of twenty-five or when he marries with my consent. Well, he will reach the age of twenty-five and he will marry on April 5. On that day the solicitors of his future wife will make their scrutiny of my accounts. It is regarded, you understand, as a mere formality. But it amuses me to think of the faces of Coke and Coke when they come to certain figures! It was an outlaw of some sort, was it not, who danced and sang beneath the gallows? I wonder, now, what sort of traitor, outlaw, or stealthy politician I should have made in the Middle Ages. It is certain that, save for this one particular of property, I should be in very truth illustrious. No doubt the state shall come at last in which there shall no more be any property. I was born before my time.

For it is certain that I am illustrious save in that one respect. To-day young Edward Burden came here to

the office to introduce me to his *fiancée.* You observe that I have robbed her. The Burden property is really crippled. They came, this bright young couple, to get a cheque from me with which to purchase a motor-car. They are to try several cars in the next three weeks. On the day before the wedding they are to choose one that will suit them best—and on the wedding-day in the evening they are to start for Italy. They will be coming towards you. . . . Then no doubt, too, a telegram will reach them, to say that in all probability motor-cars will be things not for them for several years to come. What a crumbling of their lives!

It was odd how I felt towards *her.* You know his pompous, high forehead, the shine all over him, the grave, weighty manner. He held his hat—a wonderful shiny, "good" hat—before his mouth, for all the world as if he had been in church. He made, even, a speech in introducing Miss Averies to me. You see, in a sense, he was in a temple. My office enshrined a deity, a divinity: the law, property, the rights of man as maintained by an august constitution. I am for him such a wonderfully "safe" man. My dear one, you cannot imagine how I feel towards him: a little like a deity, a little like an avenging Providence. I imagine that the real Deity must feel towards some of His worshippers much as I feel towards this phœnix of the divines.

The Deity is after all the supreme Artist—and the supreme quality of Art is surprise.

Imagine then the feeling of the Deity towards some of those who most confidently enter His temple. Just imagine His attitude towards those who deal in the obvious platitudes that "honesty is the best policy," or "genius the capacity for taking pains." So for days the world appears to them. Then suddenly: honesty no longer pays; the creature, amassing with his infinite

pains, data for his Great Work, is discovered to have produced a work of an Infinite Dulness. That is the all-suffering Deity manifesting Himself to His worshippers. For assuredly a day comes when two added to two no longer results in four. That day will come on April 5 for Edward Burden.

After all he has done nothing to make two and two become four. He has not even checked his accounts: well: for some years now I have been doing as much as that. But with his *fiancée* it is different. She is a fair, slight girl with eyes that dilate under all sorts of emotion. In my office she appears not a confident worshipper but a rather frightened fawn led before an Anthropomorphic Deity. And, strangely enough, though young Burden who trusts me inspires me with a sardonic dislike, I felt myself saying to this poor little thing that faced me: "Why: I have wronged you!" And I regretted it.

She, you see, has after all given something towards a right to enjoy the Burden estates and the Burden wealth; she has given her fragile beauty, her amiability, her worship, no doubt, of the intolerable Edward. And all this payment in the proper coin: so she has in a sense a right. . . .

Good-night, dear one, I think you have it in your power—you *might* have it in your power—to atone to this little creature. To-morrow I will tell you why and how.

III

I WROTE last night that you have something in your power. If you wished it you could make me live on. I am confident that you will not wish it: for you will understand that capriciously or intolerably I am tired of living this life. I desire you so terribly that now, even the excitement of fooling Burden no longer hypnotizes me into an acceptance of life without you. Frankly, I am tired out. If I had to go on living any longer I should have to ask you to be mine in one form or other. With that and with my ability—for of course I have great ability—I could go on fooling Burden for ever. I could restore: I could make sounder than ever it was that preposterous "going concern" the Burden Estate. Unless I like to let them, I think that the wife's solicitors will not discover what I have done. For, frankly, I have put myself out in this matter in order to be amusing to myself and ingenious. I have forged whole builders' estimates for repairs that were never executed: I have invented whole hosts of defaulting tenants. It has not been latterly for money that I have done this: it has been simply for the sheer amusement of looking at Edward Burden and saying to myself:

"Ah: you trust me, my sleek friend. Well. . . ."

But indeed I fancy that I am rich enough to be able to restore to them all that I have taken. And, looking at Edward Burden's little *fiancée*, I was almost tempted to set upon that weary course of juggling. But I am at the end of my tether. I cannot live without you

longer. And I do not wish to ask you. Later I will tell you Or No—I will tell you now.

You see, my dear thing, it is a question of going one better. It would be easy enough to deceive your husband: it would be easier still to go away together. I think that neither you nor I have ever had any conscientious scruples. But, analysing the matter down to its very depths, I think we arrive at this, that without the motives for self-restraint that other people have we are anxious to show more self-restraint than they. We are doing certain work not for payment but for sheer love of work. Do I make myself clear? For myself I have a great pride in your image. I can say to myself: "Here is a woman, my complement. She has no respect for the law. She does not value what a respect for the law would bring her. Yet she remains purer than the purest of the makers of law." And I think it is the converse of that feeling that you have for me.

If you desire me to live on, I will live on: I am so swayed by you that if you desire me to break away from this ideal of you, the breath of a command will send me round to your side.

I am ready to give my life for this Ideal: nay more, I am ready to sacrifice you to it, since I know that life for you will remain a very bitter thing. I know, a little, what renunciation means.

And I am asking you to bear it—for the sake of my ideal of you. For, assuredly, unless I can have you I must die—and I know that you will not ask me to have you. And I love you: and bless you for it.

IV

I HAVE just come in from *Tristan and Isolde.*

I had to hurry and be there for the first notes because you—my you—would, I felt, be sitting beside me as you have so often. That, of course, is passion—the passion that makes us unaccountable in our actions.

I found you naturally: but I found, too, something else. It has always a little puzzled me why we return to Tristan. There are passages in that thing as intolerable as anything in any of the Germanic master's scores. But we are held—simply by the idea of the love-philtre: it's that alone that interests us. We do not care about the initial amenities of Tristan and the prima donna: we do not believe in Mark's psychologising: but, from the moment when those two dismal marionettes have drained unconsideringly the impossible cup, they become suddenly alive, and we see two human beings under the grip of a passion—acting as irrationally as I did when I promised my cabman five shillings to get me to the theatre in time for the opening bars.

It is, you see, the love-philtre that performs this miracle. It interests—it is real to us—because every human being knows what it is to act, irrationally, under the stress of some passion or other. We are drawn along irresistibly: we commit the predestined follies or the predestined heroisms: the other side of our being acts in contravention of all our rules of conduct or of intellect. Here, in Tristan, we see such madness justified with a concrete substance, a herb, a root. We see

a vision of a state of mind in which morality no longer exists: we are given a respite, a rest: an interval in which no standard of conduct oppresses us. It is an idea of an appeal more universal than any other in which the tired imagination of humanity takes refuge.

The thought that somewhere in the world there should be something that I could give to you, or you to me, that would leave us free to do what we wish without the drag of the thought of what we owe, to each other, to the world! And after all, what greater gift could one give to another? It would be the essential freedom. For assuredly, the philtre could do no more than put it in a man's power to do what he would do if he were let loose. He would not bring out more than he had in him: but he would fully and finally express himself.

Something unexpected has changed the current of my thoughts. Nothing can change their complexion, which is governed not by what others do but by the action which I must face presently. And I don't know why I should use the word unexpected, unless because at the moment I was very far from expecting that sort of perplexity. The correct thing to say would be that something natural has happened.

Perfectly natural. Asceticism is the last thing that one could expect from the Burdens. Alexander Burden, the father, was an exuberant millionaire, in no vulgar way, of course; he was exuberant with restraint, not for show, with a magnificence which was for private satisfaction mainly. I am talking here of the ascetic temperament which is based on renunciation, not of mere simplicity of tastes, which is simply scorn for certain orders of sensations. There have been millionaires who have lived simply. There have been millionaires who have lived sordidly—but miserliness is one of the supreme forms of sensualism.

Poor Burden had a magnificent physique. The reserved abilities of generations of impoverished Burdens, starved for want of opportunities, matured in his immense success—and all their starved appetites too. But all the reserve quality of obscure Burdens has been exhausted in him. There was nothing to come to his son—who at most could have been a great match and is to-day looked upon in that light, I suppose, by the relations of his future wife. I don't know in what light that young man looks upon himself. His time of trial is coming.

Yesterday at eight in the evening he came to see me. I thought at first he wanted some money urgently. But very soon I reflected that he need not have looked so embarrassed in that case. And presently I discovered that it was not money that he was in need of. He looked as though he had come, with that characteristic gravity of his—so unlike his father—to seek absolution at my hands. But that intention he judged more decorous, I suppose, to present to me as a case of conscience.

Of course it was the case of a girl—not his *fiancée*. At first I thought he was in an ugly scrape. Nothing of the kind. The excellent creature who had accepted his protection for some two years past—how dull they must have seemed to her—was perhaps for that reason perfectly resigned to forego that advantage. At the same time, she was not too proud to accept a certain provision, compensation—whatever you like to call it. I had never heard of anything so proper in my life. He need not have explained the matter to me at all. But evidently he had made up his mind to indulge in the luxury of a conscience.

To indulge that sort of conscience leads one almost as far as indulged passion, only, I cannot help thinking,

on a more sordid road. A luxury snatched from the fire is in a way purified, but to find this one he had gone apparently to the bottom of his heart. I don't charge him with a particularly odious degree of corruption, but I perceived clearly that what he wanted really was to project the sinful effect of that irregular connection—let us call it—into his regulated, reformed, I may say lawfully blessed state—for the sake of retrospective enjoyment, I suppose. This rather subtle, if unholy, appetite, he was pleased to call the voice of his conscience. I listened to his dialectic exercises till the great word that was sure to come out sooner or later was pronounced.

"It seems," he said, with every appearance of distress, "that from a strictly moral point of view I ought to make a clean breast of it to Annie."

I listened to him—and, by Heaven, listening to him I *do* feel like the God-head of whom I have already written to you. You know, positively he said that at the very moment of his "fall" he had thought of what *I* should think of him. And I said:

"My good Edward, you are the most debauched person I have ever met."

His face fell, his soft lips dropped right down into a horseshoe. He had come to me as one of those bland optimists *would* go to his deity. He expected to be able to say: "I have sinned," and to be able to hear the Deity say: "That's all right, your very frank confession does you infinite credit." His deity was, in fact, to find him some way out of his moral hole. I was to find him some genial excuse; to make him feel good in his excellent digestion once more. That was, absolutely, his point of view, for at my brutal pronouncement he stuttered:

"But—but surely . . . the faults of youth . . and surely there are plenty of others? . . ."

I shook my head at him and panic was dropping out of his eyes: "Can't I marry Annie honourably?" he quavered. I took a sinister delight in turning the knife inside him. I was going to let him go anyhow: the sort of cat that I am always lets its mice go. (That mouse, by-the-bye, has never again put in an appearance.)

"My dear fellow," I said, "does not your delicacy let you see the hole you put me into? It's to my interest that you should not marry Miss Averies and you ask me to advise you on the point."

His mouth dropped open: positively he had never considered that when he married I lost the confounded three hundred a year for administering the Burden Trust. I sat and smiled at him to give him plenty of time to let his mind agonize over his position.

"Oh, hang it," he said. . . . And his silly eyes rolled round my room looking for that Providence that he felt ought to intervene in his behalf. When they rested on me again I said:

"There, go away. Of course it's a fault of your youth. Of course every man that's fit to call himself a man has seduced a clergyman's daughter."

He said:

"Oh, but there was not anything common about it."

"No," I answered, "you had an uncommonly good time of it with your moral scruples. I envy you the capacity. You'll have a duller one with Miss Averies, you know."

That was too much for him to take in, so he smoothed his hat.

"When you said I was . . . debauched . . . you were only laughing at me. That was hardly fair. I'm tremendously in earnest."

"You're only play-acting compared with me," I answered. He had the air of buttoning his coat after

putting a cheque into his breast pocket. He had got, you see, the cheque he expected: my applause of his successful seduction, my envy of his good fortune. That was what he had come for—and he got it. He went away with it pretty bare-facedly, but he stopped at the threshold to let drop:

"Of course if I had known you would be offended by my having recourse to Annie's solicitors for the settlement . . ."

I told him I was laughing at him about that too.

"It was the correct thing to do, you know," were the words he shut the door upon. The ass . . .

The phrase of his—that he had thought of me at the moment of his fall—gives you at once the measure of his respect for me. But it gave me much more. It gave me my cue: it put it into my head to say he was debauched. And, indeed, that is debauchery. For it is the introduction of one's morals into the management of one's appetites that makes an indulgence of them debauchery. Had my friend Edward regarded his seduction as the thing he so much desired me to tell him it was; a thing of youth, high spirits—a thing we all do—had he so regarded it I could not really have called it debauchery. But—and this is the profound truth—the measure of debauchery is the amount of joy we get from the indulgence of our appetites. And the measure of joy we get is the amount of excitement: if it brings into play not only all our physical but all our moral nature then we have the crucial point beyond which no man can go. It isn't, in fact, the professional seducer, the artist in seduction that gets pleasure from the pursuit of his avocation, any more than it is the professional musician who gets thrills from the performance of music. You cannot figure to yourself the violinist, as he fiddles the most complicated passage of

a concerto, when he really surmounts the difficulty by dint of using all his knowledge and all his skill—you cannot imagine him thinking of his adviser, his mother, his God and all the other things that my young friend says he thought about. And it is the same with the professional seducer. He may do all that he knows to bring his object about—but that is not debauchery. It is, by comparison, a joyless occupation: it is drinking when you are thirsty. Putting it in terms of the most threadbare allegory—you cannot imagine that Adam got out of the fall the pleasure that Edward Burden got out of his bite of the apple.

But Edward Burden, whilst he shilly-shallied with "Shall I?" and "Sha'n't I?" could deliciously introduce into the matter *all* his human relationships. He could think of me, of his mother, of the fact that potentially he was casting to the winds the very cause for his existence. For assuredly, if Edward Burden have a cause for existence it is that he should not, morally or physically, do anything that would unfit him to make a good marriage. So he had, along with what physical pleasure there might be, the immense excitement of staking his all along with the tremendous elation of the debate within himself that went before. For he was actually staking his all upon the chance that he could both take what he desired and afterwards reconcile it with his conscience to make a good match. Well, he has staked and won. That is the true debauchery. That, in a sense, is the compensating joy that Puritanism gets.

V

I HAVE just come in. Again you will not guess from where. From choosing a motor-car with Burden and his *fiancée*. It seems incredible that I should be called upon to preside at these preparations for my own execution. I looked at hundreds of these shiny engines, with the monstrously inflated white wheels, and gave a half-amused—but I can assure you a half-interested—attention to my own case. For one of these will one day—and soon now—be arrested in a long rush, by my extinction. In it there will be seated the two young people who went with me through the garages. They will sit in some sort of cushioned ease—the cushions will be green, or red, or blue in shiny leather. I think, however, that they will not be green—because Miss Averies let slip to me, in a little flutter of shy confidence, the words: "Oh, don't let's have green, because it's an unlucky colour." Edward Burden, of course, suppressed her with a hurried whisper as if, in thus giving herself away to me, she must be committing a sin against the house of Burden.

That, naturally, is the Burden tradition: a Burden's wife must possess frailties: but she must feign perfection even to a trusted adviser of the family. She must not confess to superstitions. It was amusing, the small incident, because it was the very first attempt that little Miss Averies has ever made to get near me. God knows what Edward may have made me appear to her: but I fancy that, whatever Edward may have said, she had pierced through that particular veil: she

realizes, with her intuition, that I am dangerous. She is alarmed and possibly fascinated because she feels that I am not "straight"—that I might, in fact, be a woman or a poet. Burden, of course, has never got beyond seeing that I dress better than he does and choose a dinner better than his uncle Darlington.

I came, of course, out of the motor-car ordeal with flying colours—on these lines. I lived, in fact, up to my character for being orthodox in the matter of comfort. I even suggested two little mirrors, like those which were so comforting to us all when we sat in hansom cabs. That struck Burden as being the height of ingenuity—and I know it proved to Miss Averies, most finally, that I am dangerous, since no woman ever looks in those little mirrors without some small motive of coquetry. It was just after that that she said to me:

"Don't you think that the little measures on the tops of the new canisters are extravagant for China tea?"

That, of course, admitted me to the peculiar intimacy that women allow to other women, or to poets, or to dangerous men. Edward, I know, dislikes the drinking of China tea because it is against the principle of supporting the British flag. But Miss Averies in her unequal battle with this youth of the classical features slightly vulgarized, called me in to show a sign of sympathy—to give at least the flicker of the other side—of the woman, the poet, or the pessimist among men. She asked me, in fact, not to take up the cudgels to the extent of saying that China tea is the thing to drink—that would have been treason to Edward—but she desired that her instinct should be acknowledged to the extent of saying that the measures of canisters should be contrived to suit the one kind of tea as well as the other. In his blind sort of way Edward caught

the challenge in the remark and his straight brows lowered a very little.

"If you don't have more than three pounds of China tea in the house in a year it won't matter about the measures," he said. "We never use more at Shackleton."

"But it makes the tea too strong, Edward."

"Then you need not fill the measure," he answered.

"Oh, I wish," she said to me, "that you'd tell Edward not to make me make tea at all. I dread it. The servants do it so much better."

"So," I asked, "Edward has arranged everything down to the last detail?"

Edward looked to me for approval and applause.

"You see, Annie has had so little experience, and I've had to look after my mother's house for years." His air said: "Yes! You'll see our establishment will be run on the very best lines! Don't you admire the way I'm taming her already?"

I gave him, of course, a significant glance. Heaven knows why: for it is absolutely true that I am tired of appearing reliable—to Edward Burden or any one else in the world. What I want to do is simply to say to Edward Burden: "No, I don't at all admire your dragging down a little bundle of ideals and sentiments to your own fatted calf's level."

I suppose I have in me something of the poet. I can imagine that if I had to love or to marry this little Averies girl I should try to find out what was her tiny vanity and I should minister to it. In some way I should discover from her that she considered herself charming, or discreet, or tasteful, or frivolous, beyond all her fellows. And, having discovered it, I should bend all my energies to giving her opportunities for displaying her charm, her discreetness or her coquetry.

With a woman of larger and finer mould—with you!—I should no doubt bring into play my own idealism. I should invest her with the attributes that I consider the most desirable in the world. But in either case I cannot figure myself dragging her down to my own social or material necessities.

That is what Edward Burden is doing for little Miss Averies. I don't mean to say that he does not idealize her—but he sees her transfigured as the dispenser of his special brand of tea or the mother of the sort of child that he was. And that seems to me a very valid reason why women, if they were wise, should trust their fortunes cold-bloodedly and of set reason to the class of dangerous men that now allure them and that they flee from.

They flee from them, I am convinced, because they fear for their worldly material fortunes. They fear, that is to say, that the poet is not a stable man of business: they recognize that he is a gambler—and it seems to them that it is folly to trust to a gambler for life-long protection. In that they are perhaps right. But I think that no woman doubts her power to retain a man's affection—so that it is not to the reputation for matrimonial instability that the poet owes his disfavour. A woman lives, in short, to play with this particular fire, since to herself she says: "Here is a man who has broken the hearts of many women. I will essay the adventure of taming him." And, if she considers the adventure a dangerous one, that renders the contest only the more alluring, since at heart every woman, like every poet, is a gambler. In that perhaps she is right.

But it seems to me that women make a great mistake in the value of the stakes they are ready to pay in order to enter this game. They will stake, that is to say,

their relatively great coin—their sentimental lives; but they hoard with closed fingers the threepenny bit which is merely the material future.

They prefer, that is to say, to be rendered the mere presiding geniuses of well-loaded boards. It is better to be a lady—which you will remember philologically means a "loaf-cutter"—than to be an Ideal.

And in this they are obviously wrong. If a woman can achieve the obvious miracle of making a dangerous man stable in his affections she may well be confident that she can persuade him to turn his serious attention to the task of keeping a roof over her head. Certainly, I know, if I were a woman which of the two types of men I would choose. Upon the lowest basis it is better for all purposes of human contracts to be married to a good liar than to a bad one. For a lie is a figurative truth—and it is the poet who is the master of these illusions. Even in the matter of marital relations it is probable that the poet is as faithful as the Edward Burdens of this world—only the Edward Burdens are more skilful at concealing from the rest of the world their pleasant vices. I doubt whether they are as skilful at concealing them from the woman concerned—from the woman, with her intuition, her power to seize fine shades of coolness and her awakened self-interest. Imagine the wife of Edward Burden saying to him, "You have deceived me!" Imagine then the excellent youth, crimsoning, stuttering. He has been taught all his life that truth must prevail though the skies fall—and he stammers: "Yes: I have betrayed you." And that is tragedy, though in the psychological sense—and that is the important one—Edward Burden may have been as faithful as the ravens, who live for fifteen decades with the same mate. He will, in short, blunder into a tragic, false position. And he will make the

tragedy only the more tragic in that all the intellectual powers he may possess will be in the direction of perpetuating the dismal position. He will not be able to argue that he has not been unfaithful—but he will be able to find a hundred arguments for the miserable woman prolonging her life with him. Position, money, the interests of the children, the feelings of her family and of his—all these considerations will make him eloquent to urge her to prolong her misery. And probably she will prolong it.

This, of course, is due to the excellent Edward's lack of an instinctive sympathy. The poet, with a truer vision, will in the same case, be able to face his Miss Averies' saying: "You have deceived me!" with a different assurance. Supposing the deflection to have been of the momentary kind he will be able to deny with a good conscience since he will be aware of himself and his feelings. He will at least be able to put the case in its just light. Or, if the deflection be really temperamental, really permanent, he will be unable—it being his business to look at the deeper verities—to lie himself out of the matter. He will break, strictly and sharply. Or, if he do not, it may be taken as a sign that his Miss Averies is still of value to him—that she, in fact, is still the woman that it is his desire to have for his companion. This is true of course, only in the large sense, since obviously there are poets whose reverence for position, the interest of children or the feelings of their friends and relatives, may outweigh their hatred of a false position. These, however, are poets in the sense that they write verse: I am speaking of those who live the poet's life; to such, a false position is too intolerable to be long maintained.

But this again is only one of innumerable side-issues: let me return to my main contention that a dinner of

herbs with a dangerous man is better than having to consume the flesh of stalled oxen with Edward Burden. Perhaps that is only a way of saying that you would have done better to entrust yourself to me than to—— (But no, your husband is a better man than Edward Burden. He has at least had the courage to revert to his passion. I went this afternoon to your chemists and formally notified them that if they supplied him with more than the exactly prescribed quantity of that stuff, I, as holding your power of attorney, should do all that the law allows me to do against them.)

Even to the dullest of men, marrying is for the most part an imaginative act. I mean marrying as a step in life sanctioned by law, custom and that general consent of mankind which is the hall-mark of every irrational institution. By irrational I do not mean wrong or stupid. Marriage is august by the magnitude of the issues it involves, balancing peace and strife on the fine point of a natural impulse refined by the need of a tangible ideal. I am not speaking here of mere domestic peace or strife which for most people that count are a question of manners and a mode of life. And I am thinking of the peace mostly—the peace of the soul which yearns for some sort of certitude in this earth, the peace of the heart which yearns for conquest, the peace of the senses that dreads deception, the peace of the imaginative faculty which in its restless quest of a high place of rest is spurred on by these great desires and that great fear.

And even Edward Burden's imagination is moved by these very desires and that very fear—or else he would not have dreamt of marrying. I repeat, marriage is an imaginative institution. It's true that his imagination is a poor thing but it is genuine nevertheless. The faculty of which I speak is of one kind in all of us. Not

to every one is given that depth of feeling, that faculty of absolute trust which *will not* be deceived, and the exulting masterfulness of the senses which are the mark of a fearless lover. Fearless lovers are rare, if obstinate, and sensual fools are countless as grains of sand by the seashore. I can imagine that correct young man perfectly capable of setting himself deliberately to worry a distracted girl into surrender.

VI

I DON'T know why, to-night in particular, the fact that I am a dead man occurs to me very insistently. I had forgotten this for two whole days. If any one very dear to you has ever been *in extremis* at a distance and you have journeyed to be at the last bedside, you will know how possible this is—how for hours at a time the mind will go wandering away from the main fact that is drawing you onwards, till suddenly it comes back: some one is dying at a distance. And I suppose one's I is the nearest friend that one has—and my I is dying at a distance. At the end of a certain number of days is the deathbed towards which I am hurrying—it is a fact which I cannot grasp. But one aspect grows more clear to me every time I return to this subject.

You remember that, when we have discussed suicide, we have agreed that to the man of action death is a solution: to the man of thoughts it is none. For the man of action expresses himself in action, and death is the negation of action: the man of thought sees the world only in thoughts, and over thought death exercises no solution of continuity. If one dies one's actions cease, one's problem continues. For that reason it is only in so far as I am a man of action that I shall be dying. You understand what I mean—for I do not mean that it is my actions that have killed me. It is simply because I have taken refuge from my thoughts in action, and because after April 5 that refuge will be closed to me, that I take refuge in a final action which, properly speaking, is neither action nor refuge.

And perhaps I am no man of action at all, since the action in which I have taken refuge is properly speaking no action at all, but merely the expression of a frame of mind. I have gambled, that is to say I have not speculated. For the speculator acts for gain: the gambler in order to interest himself. I have gambled —to escape from you: I have tried to escape from my thoughts of you into divining the undivinable future. For that is what gambling is. You try for a rise: you try for a fall—and the rise or the fall may depend on the momentary madness of a dozen men who declare a war, or upon the rain from heaven which causes so many more stalks of wheat to arise upon so many million square inches of earth. The point is that you make yourself dependent upon caprice—upon the caprice of the weather or upon the movement in the minds of men more insane than yourself.

To-day I have entered upon what is the biggest gamble of my whole life. Certain men who believe in me—they are not Edward Burdens, nevertheless they believe in me—have proposed to me to form a corner in a certain article which is indispensable to the daily life of the City. I do not tell you what it is because you will assuredly witness the effects of this inspiration.

You will say that, when this is accomplished, it will be utterly uninteresting. And that is literally true: when it is done it will be uninteresting. But in the multiplicity of things that will have to be done before the whole thing is done—in the waiting for things to take effect, in the failures perhaps more than in the successes, since the failures will imply new devising—in all the meticulous thought-readings that will be necessary, the interest will lie, and in the men with whom one is brought into contact, the men with whom one struggles, the men whom one must bribe or trick.

And you will say: How can I who am to die in fourteen days embark upon an enterprise that will last many months or many years? That, I think, is very simple.

It is my protest against being called a man of action, the misconception that I have had to resent all my life. And this is a thought: not an action: a thought made up of an almost infinite number of erring calculations. You have probably forgotten that I have founded two towns, upon the south coast: originated four railways in tropical climates and one in the west of England: and opened up heaven knows how many mines of one kind or another—and upon my soul I had forgotten these things too until I began to cast about in my mind. And now I go to my deat hunmindful of these glories in so far as they are concrete. In that sense my death is utter: it is a solution. But, in so far as they are my refuges from you they remain problems to which, if my ghost is to escape you, I must return again and again.

In dying I surrender to you and thus, for the inner self of myself, death is no ending but the commencement of who knows what tortures. It is only in the latent hope that death is the negative of consciousness that I shall take my life. For death, though it can very certainly end no problem, may at least make us unconscious of how, eventually, the problem solves itself. That, you see, is really the crux of the whole thing—that is why the man of action will take refuge in death: the man of thought, never. But I, I am the man of neither the one nor the other: I am the man of love, which partakes of action and of thought, but which is neither.

The lover is, perhaps, the eternal doubter—simply because there is no certain panacea for love. Travel may

cure it—but travel may cause to arise homesickness, which of all forms of love is the most terrible. To mix with many other men may cure it—but again, to the man who really loves, it may be a cause for still more terrible unrest, since seeing other men and women may set one always comparing the beloved object with the same thing. And, indeed, the form that it takes with me—for with me love takes the form of a desire to discuss—the form which it takes with me renders each thing that I see, each man with whom I speak, the more torturing, since always I desire to adjust my thoughts of them by your thoughts. I went down the other day —before I had begun to write these letters to you and before I knew death impended so nearly over me—to the sea at P—. I was trying to get rid of you. I sat in the moonlight and saw the smacks come home, visible for a minute in the track of the moon and then no more than their lights in the darkness. The fishermen talked of death by drowning mostly: the passage of the boats across that trail of light suggested reflections, no doubt trite. But, without you to set my thoughts by, I could get no more forward: I went round and round in a ring from the corpses fished up in the nets to the track of the moon. And since walking up and down on the parade brought me no nearer to you, I did not even care to move: I neither meditated nor walked, neither thought nor acted. And that is real torture.

It was the next morning that I heard that young Burden desired that his *fiancée's* solicitors should scrutinize the accounts of the Burden Trust—and Death loomed up before me.

You will ask: why Death? Why not some alternative? Flight or prison? Well: prison would be an unendurable travelling through Time; flight, an equally unendurable travelling through Time with Space added.

Both these things are familiar: Death alone, in spite of all the experience that humanity has had of Death, is the utterly unfamiliar. For a gambler it is a *coup* alluring beyond belief—as we know neither what we stake nor what we stand to win. I, personally, stand to win a great deal, since Life holds nothing for me and I stake only my life—and what I seek is only forgetfulness of you, or some sort of eventual and incomprehensible union with you. For the union with you that I seek is a queer sort of thing; hardly at all, I think, a union of the body, but a sort of consciousness of our thoughts proceeding onwards together. That we may find in the unending Afterwards. Or we may find the Herb Oblivion.

Either of these things I desire. For, in so far as we can dogmatize about Death we may lay it down that Death is the negation of Action but is powerless against Thought. I do not desire Action: and at the same time I do not fear Thought. For it is not my thoughts of you that I fear: left alone with them I can say: "What is she more than any other material object?" It is my feelings that wear out my brain—my feelings that make me know that you are more than every material object living or still, and more than every faith dead or surviving. For feeling is neither Thought nor Action: it is the very stuff of Life itself. And, if Death be the negation of Life it may well be the end of consciousness.

The worst that Death can do to me is to deliver me up for ever to unsatisfied longings for you. Well, that is all that Life has done, that is all that Life can do, for me.

But Life can do so much more that is worse. Believe me when I say that I dread imprisonment—and believe me when I say that I do not dread disgrace. For you

know very well that it is true when I say that I positively chuckle at the thought of the shock my fall would give to all these unawakened intelligences of this world. You know how I despise Edward Burden for trusting in me; you know how I have always despised other people who trusted in established reputations. I don't mean to say that I should not have liked to keep the game up, certainly I should, since in gambling it is more desirable to win than to lose. And it is more amusing to fool fools than to give them eye-openers. But I think that, in gambling, it is only a shade less desirable, *per se*, to lose than to win. The main point is the sensation of either; and the only valid objection to losing is that, if one loses too often one has at last no longer the wherewithal to gamble. Similarly, to give people eye-openers is, *per se*, nearly as desirable as to fool them. It is not quite so desirable, since the game itself is the fooling. But the great objection in *my* case is that the eye-opener would once and for all put an end to the chance of my ever fooling them again. That, however, is a very small matter and what I dread is not that. If people no longer trusted in me I could no doubt still find an outlet for my energies with those who sought to take advantage of my abilities, trusting to themselves to wrest from me a sufficient share of the plunder that they so ardently desire, that I so really have no use for.

No, I seek in Death a refuge from exposure not because exposure would cripple my energies: it would probably help them: and not because exposure would mean disgrace; I should probably find ironical satisfaction in it—but simply because it would mean imprisonment. That I dread beyond belief: I clench my fingers when, in conversation, I hear the words: "A long sentence." For that would mean my being delivered up for a long time—for ever—to you. I write

"for ever" advisedly and after reflection, since a long subjection, without relief, to that strain would leave upon my brain a wound that must prove ineffaceable. For to be alone and to think—those are my terrors.

One reads that men who have been condemned for long years to solitary imprisonment go mad. But I think that even that sad gift from Omnipotent Fate would not be mine. As I figure the world to myself, Fate is terrible only to those who surrender to her. If I surrendered, to the extent of living to go to prison, then assuredly the future must be uniformly heavy, uniformly doomed, in my eyes. For I would as soon be mad as anything else I can think of. But I should not go mad. Men go mad because of the opportunities they miss: because the world changes outside their prison walls, or because their children starve. But I have no opportunities to miss or take: the changes of the world to me are nothing, and there is no soul between home and starvation I could stand.

Whilst I am about making this final disposition of my properties—let me tell you finally what I have done in regard to your husband himself. It is a fact—and this I have been keeping up my sleeve as a final surprise for you—that he is almost cured. . . .

But I have just received an incomprehensible note from Edward Burden. He asks me for some particulars as to his confounded estate and whether I can lend him some thousands of pounds at short notice. Heaven knows what new scrape this is that he's in. Of course this may precipitate my crash. But whatever happens, I shall find time to write my final words to you—and nothing else really matters. . .

VII

I HAVEN'T yet discovered what Edward Burden is doing. I have found him a good round sum upon mortgage—the irony of the position being that the money is actually his whilst the mortgage does not actually exist. He says that what he is doing with the money will please me. I suppose that means that he's embarking upon some sort of speculation which he imagines that I would favour. It is odd that he should think that I find gratification in his imitating myself.

But why should I concern myself with this thing at all? Nothing in the world can ever please or displease me any more. For I have taken my resolve: this is my last night upon earth. When I lay down this pen again, I shall never take up any pen more. For I have said all that I can say to you. I am utterly tired out. To-night I shall make up into a parcel all these letters—I must sit through the night because it is only to-morrow morning that I shall be able to register the parcel to you—and registering it will be my last act upon the habitable globe. For biting through the glass in the ring will be not an action, but the commencement of a new train of thought. Or perhaps only my final action will come to an end when you read these words in Rome. Or will that be only thought—the part of me that lives—pleading to you to give your thoughts for company. I feel too tired to think the matter out!

Let me, then, finish with this earth: I told you, when I finished writing last night, that Robert is almost cured. I would not have told you this for the sake of

abrogating to myself the position of a saviour. But I imagine that you would like the cure to go on, and in the case of some accident after my death, it might go all to pieces once more. Quite simply then: I have been doing two things. In the first place I have persuaded your chemists to reduce very gradually the strength of chloral, so that the bottles contain nearly half water. And Robert perceives no difference. Now of course it is very important that he shall not know of the trick that is being so beneficently played on him—so that, in case he should go away or for one reason or another change his chemists, it must be carefully seen to that instead of pure chloral he obtains the exactly diluted mixture. In this way he may be brought gradually to drinking almost pure water.

But that alone would hardly be satisfactory: a comparatively involuntary cure is of little value in comparison with an effort of the will. You may, conceivably, expel nature with a fork, but nothing but a passion will expel a passion. The only point to be proved is whether there exists in your husband any other passion for the sake of which he might abandon his passion for the clearness of vision which he always says his chloral gives him. He has not, of course, the incentives usual to men: you cannot, in fact, "get" him along ordinary lines. . . . But apart from his physical craving for the drug he *has* that passion for clearness of intellect that he says the drug gives him—and it is through that, that at last, I have managed to hit his pride.

For I have put it to him very strongly that one view of life is just as good as another—no better, no worse, but just the same. And I have put it to him that his use of chloral simply limits for him the number of views of life that he might conceivably have. And, when

you come to think of all the rhapsodies of his that we have listened to, I think that that piece of special pleading is sufficiently justified. I do indeed honestly believe that, for what it is worth, he is on the road to salvation. He means to make a struggle—to attempt the great feat of once more seeing life with the eyes that Fate originally gave to him.

This is my legacy to *you:* if you ask me why I have presented you with this man's new identity—since it *will* mean a new identity—I must answer that I simply don't know. Why have we kept him alive all these years? I have done it no doubt because I had nothing to give you. But you? If you have loved me you must have wished him—I won't say dead—but no more there. Yet you have tried too—and I suppose this answer to the riddle is simply the answer to the whole riddle of our life. We have tried to play a supremely difficult game simply because it sanctified our love. For, after all, sanctification arises from difficulties. Well, we have made our way very strait and we have so narrowed the door of entrance that it has vanished altogether. We have never had *any* hope of a solution that could have satisfied us. If we had cared to break the rules of the game, I suppose we could have done it easily enough—and we could have done it the more easily since neither you nor I ever subscribed to those rules. If we have not it was, I think, simply because we sought the difficulty which sanctifies. . . . Has it been a very imbecile proceeding? I am most uncertain. For it is not a thing to be very proud of—to be able to say that for a whole lifetime, one has abstained from that which one most desired. On the other hand, we have won a curious and difficult game. Well—there it is—and there is your legacy. I do not think that there is

anything else for me to write about. You will see that, in my will, I have left everything I possess to—Edward Burden. This is not because I wish to make him reparation, and it's not because I wish to avoid scandal: it is simply because it may show him—one very simple thing. It will show him how very nearly I might have made things come right. I have been balancing my accounts very carefully, and I find that, reckoning things reasonably against myself, Edward Burden will have a five-pound note with which to buy himself a mourning-ring.

The being forced to attend to my accounts will make him gasp a good deal. It will certainly shake his belief in all accepted reputations—for he will look on the faces of many men each "as solid as the Bank of England," and he will think: "I wonder if you are like ——?" His whole world will crumble—not because I have been dishonest, since he is coldblooded enough to believe that all men may be dishonest. But he will tremble because I have been able to be so wildly dishonest and yet to be so successfully respectable. He won't even dare to "expose" me, since, if he did that, half of the shares which he will inherit from me would suffer an eclipse of disreputability, would tumble to nothingness in value—and would damage his poor pocket. He will have to have my estate set down at a high figure; he will have to be congratulated on his fortunate inheritance, and he will have, sedulously, to compound my felony.

You will wonder how I can be capable of this final cruelty—the most cruel thing that, perhaps, ever one man did to another. I will tell you why it is: it is because I hate all the Edward Burdens of the world—because, being the eternal Haves of the world, they have made their idiotic rules of the game. And you and I

suffer; you and I, the eternal Have Nots. And we suffer, not because their rules bind us, but because, being the finer spirits, we are forced to set ourselves rules that are still more strict in order that, in all things, we may be the truly gallant.

But why do I write: "You will wonder how I can be capable of this." You will have understood—you who understand everything.

Eight in the morning.—Well: now we part. I am going to register the parcel containing all these letters to you. We part: and it is as if you were dropping back—the lost Eurydice of the world—into an utter blackness. For, in a minute, you will be no more than part of my past. Well then: good-night.

VIII

You will have got the telegram I sent you long before you got the parcel of letters; you will have got the note I wrote you by the same post as the letters themselves. If I have taken these three days to myself before again writing to you it has been because I have needed to recover my power of thinking. Now, in a way, I have recovered it—and it is only fair to say that I have devoted all my thoughts to how the new situation affects you—and you in your relations to me.

It places me in your hands—let that be written first and foremost. You have to decree my life or my death. For I take it that now we can never get back again into our old position: I have spoken, you have heard me speak. The singular unity, the silence of our old life is done with for good. There is perhaps no reason why this should not be so: silence is no necessary part of our relationship. But it has seemed to make a rather exquisite bond between us.

It must, if I am to continue to live—it must be replaced by some other bond. In our silence we have seemed to speak in all sorts of strange ways: we have perhaps read each other's thoughts. I have seen words form themselves upon your lips. But now you must —there is no way out of it—you *must* write to me. You must write to me fully: all your thoughts. You must, as I have done, find the means of speech—or I can no longer live. . . .

I am reprieved!

I don't know if, in my note to you, I explained exactly

what had happened. It was in this way. I was anxious to be done with my world very early and, as soon as eight o'clock struck, I set out for the post-office at the corner to register that parcel of letters for you. Till the task was accomplished—the last I was to perform on earth—I noticed nothing: I was simply in a hurry. But, having given the little fagot into the hands of a sleepy girl, I said to myself suddenly: "Now I *am* dead!" I began suddenly as they say of young children, to "notice." A weight that I had never felt before seemed to fall away from me. I noticed, precisely, that the girl clerk was sleepy, that, as she reached up one hand to take the parcel over the brass caging, she placed the other over her mouth to hide a yawn.

And out on the pavement it was most curious what had befallen the world. It had lost all interest: but it had become fascinating, vivid. I had not, you see, any senses left, but my eyesight and hearing. Vivid: that is the word. I watched a newsboy throw his papers down an area, and it appeared wonderfully interesting to discover that *that* was how one's papers got into the house. I watched a milkman go up some doorsteps to put a can of milk beside a boot-scraper and I was wonderfully interested to see a black cat follow him. They were the clearest moments I have ever spent upon the earth—those when I was dead. They were so clear because nothing else weighed on my attention but just those little things. It was an extraordinary, a luxuriant feeling. That, I imagine, must have been how Adam and Eve felt before they had eaten of the fruit of knowledge.

Supposing I had tacitly arranged with myself that I would die in the street, I think I should still have walked home simply to dally longer with that delightful

feeling of sheer curiosity. For it was sheer curiosity to see how this world, which I had never looked at, really performed before utterly unbiassed eyes.

That was why, when I got home, I sent away the messenger that brought to me Edward Burden's letter; there was to be no answer. Whatever Burden's query might be I was not going to commit myself to any other act. My last was that of sending off the parcel to you.

My opening Burden's letter when the messenger had gone was simply a part of my general curiosity. I wanted to see how a Burden letter would look when it no longer had any bearings at all for me. It was as if I were going to read a letter from that dear Edward to a man I did not know upon a subject of which I had never heard.

And then I was reprieved!

The good Edward imagining that I was seriously hurt at his having proposed to allow his wife's solicitors to superintend my stewardship—the good Edward in his concern had positively insisted that all the deeds should be returned to me absolutely unchecked. He said that he had had a hard fight for it and that the few thousands he had borrowed from me had represented his settlement, which he had thus paid in specie. . . .

It chimed in wonderfully with his character, when I come to think of it. Of course he was disciplining Miss Averies' representatives just as he had disciplined herself in the matter of China tea of which I have written to you. And he had imagined that I was seriously hurt! Can you figure to yourself such an imbecile?

But, if you permit me to continue to live, you will be saving the poor fool from the great shock I had prepared for him—the avalanche of discovery, the

earthquake of uncertainty. For he says in that so kind way of his that, having thus shown his entire confidence in me—in the fact, that is, that Providence is on the side of all Burdens—he will choose a time in the future, convenient for me, when he will go thoroughly with me into his accounts. And inasmuch as his wedding-tour will take him all around the world I have at least a year in which to set things straight. And of course I can put off his scrutiny indefinitely or deceive him for ever.

I did not think all these things at once. In fact, when I had read his letter, so strong within me was the feeling that it was only a mental phenomenon, a thing that had no relation with me—the feeling of finality was so strong upon me that I actually found myself sitting in that chair before I realized what had occurred.

What had occurred was that I had become utterly and for good your property.

In that sense only am I reprieved. As far as Edward Burden is concerned I am entirely saved. I stand before you and ask you to turn your thumb up or down. For, having spoken as I have to you, I have given you a right over me. Now that the pressing necessity for my death is over I have to ask you whether I shall plunge into new adventures that will lead me to death or whether I am to find some medium in which we may lead a life of our own, in some way together. I was about to take my life to avoid prison: now prison is no more a part of my scheme of existence. But I must now have some means of working towards you or I must run some new and wild risk to push you out of my thoughts. I don't, as you know, ask you to be my secret mistress, I don't ask you to elope with me. But I say that you *must* belong to me as much in thought

as I have, in this parcel of letters, been revealed and given over to you. Otherwise, I must once more gamble—and having tasted of gambling in the shadow of death, I must gamble for ever in that way. I must, I mean, feel that I am coming towards you or committing crimes that I may forget you.

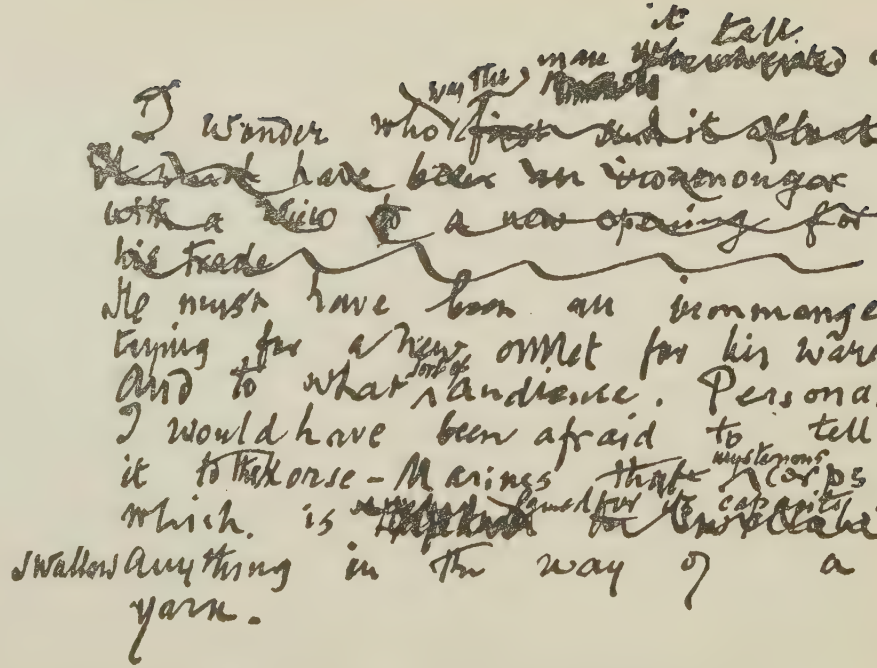
My dear, I am a very tired man. If you knew what it was to long for you as I have longed for you all these years, you would wonder that I did not, sitting in that chair, put the ring up to my teeth, in spite of Burden's letter, and end it. I have an irresistible longing for rest—or perhaps it is only your support. To think that I must face for ever—or for as long as it lasts—this troublesome excitement of avoiding thoughts of you—that was almost unbearable. I resisted because I had written these letters to you. I love you and I know you love me—yet without them I would have inflicted upon you the wound of my death. Having written them I cannot face the cruelty to you. I mean that, if I had died without your knowing why, it would have been only a death grievous to you—still it is the duty of humanity and of you with humanity to bear and to forget deaths. But now that you must know, I could not face the cruelty of filling you with the pain of unmerited remorse. For I know that you would have felt remorse, and it would have been unmerited since I gave you no chance or any time to stretch out your hands to me. Now I give it you and wait for your verdict.

For the definite alternatives are these: I will put Burden's estate absolutely clear within the year and work out, in order to make safe money, the new and comparatively sober scheme of which I have written to you: that I will do if you will consent to be mine to the extent of sharing our thoughts alone. Or, if you

will not, I will continue to gamble more wildly than ever with the Burden money. And that in the end means death and a refuge from you.

So then, I stand reprieved—and the final verdict is in your hands.

LAST ESSAYS



THE LAST WORDS THAT CONRAD WROTE

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INTRODUCTION

Most of the contents of this volume were written subsequent to the publication of "Notes on Life and Letters" in 1921, and these two books together may be said to contain practically all Conrad's miscellaneous writings. There are, it is true, a few short prefaces and some interesting letters to newspapers which might have been included here, but they are of no particular importance, and the twenty separate pieces gathered between these covers are indeed the last essays of Joseph Conrad. But there remains a chance that some of his early essays and reviews may still rest undiscovered in the files of old newspapers and weeklies. Conrad had a very uncertain memory for his own work, and I recall that when the material for "Notes on Life and Letters" was being collected, he was frequently quite vague as to what he had written and where it had appeared. In proof of this, it may be mentioned that the essay entitled "John Galsworthy" in this volume was omitted from the previous one only through Conrad's forgetfulness of its existence. Therefore, as I say, discoveries may yet be made.

In the latter years of his life Conrad occasionally found relief from the toil and exhaustion of more creative work in the writing of reminiscent essays, and some of these rank, decidedly, among his finest efforts in this direction. "Last Essays" is just as remarkable a book as "Notes on Life and Letters"; it contains passages of extraordinary charm, serenity, and eloquence. And

particular care has been taken to avoid any aspect of absolute completeness, as though a dead author's desk had been ransacked for every fragment: all the articles included in this volume have been included for very definite reasons. Nothing has been printed merely for the purpose of adding to the bulk.

For some time Conrad had had the idea of writing a pendent volume to "The Mirror of the Sea," and the unfinished article, "Legends," on which he was at work the day before he died, was, he told me, to have formed part of such a book. And I suspect that "The *Torrens*," "Christmas Day at Sea," "Ocean Travel," "Outside Literature," and part, at least, of "Geography and Some Explorers," would also have been incorporated in this book, and therefore I have placed them all together at the beginning of the volume. They form, as it were, the shadowy nucleus of a projected work.

"Geography and Some Explorers," the second longest essay in this collection, was written as a general introduction to a serial work called "Countries of the World." It appeared as "The Romance of Travel" in the first number, February, 1924, and was reprinted under its proper title in *The National Geographic Magazine*, March, 1924. In this fascinating essay, Conrad, after discussing the feats of some of the early navigators and explorers, gives a memorable account of a passage he made in 1888 (when in command of the *Otago*) through the Torres Straits on a voyage from Sydney to Mauritius.

"The *Torrens*: A Personal Tribute," was published in *The Blue Peter*, October, 1923. In the early 'nineties Conrad had been chief officer of this ship—he joined her on November 2, 1891, and left her on October 15, 1893—and he made two journeys from England to Australia and back in that capacity. For her he always retained

a warm affection, and when, in the September *Blue Peter* of 1923, there was issued a coloured illustration of the *Torrens*, he willingly consented to give a personal remembrance of her in the next number. The last words, in which he describes her end upon the shores of the Mediterranean, possess a rare and pensive beauty, which I recover in the following paragraph:

"But in the end her body of iron and wood, so fair to look upon, had to be broken up—I hope with fitting reverence; and as I sit here, thirty years, almost to a day, since I last set eyes on her, I love to think that her perfect form found a merciful end on the shores of the Sunlit Sea of my boyhood's dreams, and that her fine spirit has returned to dwell in the regions of the great winds, the inspirers and companions of her swift, renowned, sea-tossed life which I, too, have been permitted to share for a little while."

"Christmas Day at Sea" was published in the London *Daily Mail* on December 24, 1923. It was concerned largely with an episode on one Christmas Day during Conrad's first voyage to Australia in the *Duke of Sutherland* in 1879, where he served as an A. B.

"Ocean Travel" made its first appearance in the London *Evening News* of May 15, 1923, where it was named "My Hotel in Mid-Atlantic." It was written during Conrad's voyage to America in the *Tuscania* in the spring of that year, and was posted to me the moment he arrived in New York. It compares the old and the new life at sea, and, needless to say, the vote of affection is given for the old.

"Outside Literature," a short essay dealing with the subject of notices to mariners, appeared under the title "Notices to Mariners" in the *Manchester Guardian* of December 4, 1922, and under its proper title in the American *Bookman* of February, 1923.

"Legends," as I have mentioned, was the last article Conrad ever wrote; it was left unfinished upon his desk. It tells, with a strain of melancholy, of the breed of seamen who have disappeared with the disappearance of sailing ships, and was printed, less than a fortnight after Conrad's death, in the London *Daily Mail* of August 15, 1924.

Next follow two essays which have the war at sea as background. "The Unlighted Coast" recalls Conrad's experiences in the North Sea during his ten-days' cruise in the *Ready* in 1917—a full account of this cruise is to be found in Captain Sutherland's "At Sea with Joseph Conrad"—and was written for the Admiralty. For some reason or other they never used it and it first saw the light in the London *Times* of August 18, 1925.

"The Dover Patrol," written at the request of the late Lord Northcliffe,was published in the London *Times* of July 27, 1921, the day on which the Prince of Wales unveiled the Dover Patrol Memorial. It is a glowing tribute to "the physical endurance, the inborn seamanship, the matter-of-fact, industrious, indefatigable enthusiasm" of the men who guarded unsleepingly and at extreme hazard the entrance to the Channel.

The "Memorandum on the Scheme for Fitting Out a Sailing Ship" is here first printed. Written in 1919 for the Holt Steamship Company, who had proposed to fit out a sailing ship for the training of boys destined for the Mercantile Marine, it is an example of Conrad's intense and practical interest in such subjects. It is exactly what it purports to be—a memorandum, precise, technical, full of his accumulated experience and long-pondered ideas. Nothing came of the scheme: as Mr. Lawrence Holt wrote to me, it was "abandoned owing to the depression of trade which set in soon after my conversation with Mr. Conrad." The document

from then to now has been in Mr. Holt's possession, and cordial thanks are due to him for his permission to use it here.

"The Loss of the *Dalgonar*" is a further example of Conrad's interest in questions of seamanship. Indeed, I print it solely for that reason, because, in itself, it but refers to the contents of an article from another pen. It appeared, as a letter to the editor, in the London *Mercury* of December, 1921, and was called forth by a paper in the September issue entitled "A True Story: Log and Record of the Wreck of the Ship *Dalgonar* of Liverpool, bound from Callao to Taltal." This paper described the wreck of the barque *Loire*, which happened in October, 1913; and Conrad's letter, while correcting some obvious mistakes in the narrative as printed, is a testimony to the gallantry and efficiency of the officers and crew.

The essay called "Travel" was written, I am proud to think, out of friendship for myself, and formed the preface to a book by me, "Into the East: Notes on Burma and Malaya," 1923. The effort to finish "The Rover" held up the writing of this preface for about a year, but it seems to me that in its evocation of the great travellers of old and of times that have gone for ever it reaches the highest beauty and distinction. Let me quote one paragraph:

"And those things, which stand as if imperishable in the pages of old books of travel, are all blown away; have vanished as utterly as the smoke of the travellers' camp fires in the icy night air of the Gobi Desert, as the smell of incense burned in the temples of strange gods, as the voices of Asiatic statesmen speculating with the cruel wisdom of past ages on matters of peace and war."

"Stephen Crane," the longest and most elaborate essay in the book, was written as an introduction to

Mr. Thomas Beer's "Stephen Crane, a Study in American Letters," 1923. Conrad, as is generally known, was a close friend of Crane during the last years of that meteoric life, when Crane was frequently a neighbour of his in southern England. In all, he wrote three essays on Crane and his work. One appeared in "Notes on Life and Letters," two are printed in this volume, and all breathe a spirit of affectionate admiration. This essay is a study in biographical sidelights and is undoubtedly the most personal and the most delightful of all reminiscences of Crane.

The short essay, "His War Book," which follows, was composed specifically as a preface to a new edition of Crane's best-known work, "The Red Badge of Courage" —the new edition came out at last in 1925—and it gives clear indication of Conrad's feeling for the artist who could observe so truly and create with such economy.

"John Galsworthy," as I have said, was only accidentally omitted from the previous volume of Conrad's essays. It was composed as a review of "A Man of Property," contained in a wider study of the author, and was published in the London *Outlook* of March 31, 1906, under the title of "A Middle Class Family." A few years before he died, Conrad rectified, as far as he could, his oversight by privately printing about fifty copies of this essay, and he would certainly have included it in any future volume of essays.

The next piece, "A Glance at Two Books," dealing with Galsworthy's "The Island Pharisees" and Hudson's "Green Mansions," dates from even earlier and was done in 1904. Written obviously in answer to an editorial request, it was, for reasons unknown, never used, and the typescript, being found among Conrad's papers, was first printed in *T. P.'s and Cassell's Weekly* of August 1, 1925.

A "Preface to his Shorter Tales" was written at the instigation of his American publishers to introduce "The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad," and the essay, like the selection, has never appeared in England. It was one of his last completed pieces—the volume was issued after his death in 1924—and it throws a reminiscent glance upon the ideas that animated his work and upon his writing life.

The little note, "Cookery," charming in its playful fancy, was a send-off to his wife's book, "A Handbook of Cookery for a Small House," 1922. I include it here for the sake of its association and for the unique quality of its tone.

The next two pieces, both of them letters, give glimpses of Conrad's abiding interest in international questions and the affairs of Europe. He was always a student of foreign politics, a student fortified by an impressive historical sense and by a great knowledge of continental problems throughout the centuries, and these two letters, with their combined eloquence and hold upon reality, throw light upon an aspect of Conrad's mind of which few people are aware.

The first letter, an appeal for a free Constantinople under the protection of the Powers, was published in the London *Times* of November 7, 1912, when the Balkan States were at war with Turkey and their armies already within striking distance of her capital.

The second letter, written evidently a few days later to an untraceable correspondent—a typescript only was found—who had criticized his printed observations, is an amplification of the previous letter.

Finally comes "The Congo Diary," a reprint of the diary kept by Conrad in the Congo in 1890, which was first published in *The Blue Peter*, October, 1925, and then in *The Yale Review*, January, 1926. This diary

calls for its own introduction and a series of explanatory notes, and these will be found with it at the end of the book.

Here, then, are the twenty pieces which compose this volume of "Last Essays." They show as clearly as did the contents of "Notes on Life and Letters" the rich diversity of Conrad's mind, his powers of cogent argument, of fond memory, and of noble expression. His mastery over his chosen material never flagged and these essays are a last witness to his consummate gifts.

Richard Curle.

LAST ESSAYS

LAST ESSAYS

GEOGRAPHY AND SOME EXPLORERS

It is safe to say that for the majority of mankind the superiority of geography over geometry lies in the appeal of its figures. It may be an effect of the incorrigible frivolity inherent in human nature, but most of us will agree that a map is more fascinating to look at than a figure in a treatise on conic sections—at any rate for the simple minds which are all the equipment of the majority of the dwellers on this earth.

No doubt a trigonometrical survey may be a romantic undertaking, striding over deserts and leaping over valleys never before trodden by the foot of civilized man; but its accurate operations can never have for us the fascination of the first hazardous steps of a venturesome, often lonely, explorer jotting down by the light of his camp fire the thoughts, the impressions, and the toil of his day.

For a long time yet a few suggestive words grappling with things seen will have the advantage over a long array of precise, no doubt interesting, and even profitable figures. The earth is a stage, and though it may be an advantage, even to the right comprehension of the play, to know its exact configuration, it is the drama of human endeavour that will be the thing, with a ruling passion expressed by outward action marching perhaps blindly to success or failure, which themselves are often undistinguishable from each other at first.

Of all the sciences, geography finds its origin in action, and what is more, in adventurous action of the kind that appeals to sedentary people who like to dream of arduous adventure in the manner of prisoners dreaming behind bars of all the hardships and hazards of liberty dear to the heart of man.

Descriptive geography, like any other kind of science, has been built on the experience of certain phenomena and on experiments prompted by that unappeasable curiosity of men which their intelligence has elevated into a quite respectable passion for acquiring knowledge. Like other sciences it has fought its way to truth through a long series of errors. It has suffered from the love of the marvellous, from our credulity, from rash and unwarrantable assumptions, from the play of unbridled fancy.

Geography had its phase of circumstantially extravagant speculation which had nothing to do with the pursuit of truth, but has given us a curious glimpse of the mediæval mind playing in its ponderous childish way with the problems of our earth's shape, its size, its character, its products, its inhabitants. Cartography was almost as pictorial then as are some modern newspapers. It crowded its maps with pictures of strange pageants, strange trees, strange beasts, drawn with amazing precision in the midst of theoretically conceived continents. It delineated imaginary kingdoms of Monomotapa and of Prester John, the regions infested by lions or haunted by unicorns, inhabited by men with reversed feet, or eyes in the middle of their breasts.

All this might have been amusing if the mediæval gravity in the absurd had not been in itself a wearisome thing. But what of that! Has not the key science of modern chemistry passed through its dishonest phase

of Alchemy (a portentous development of the confidence trick), and our knowledge of the starry sky been arrived at through the superstitious idealism of Astrology looking for men's fate in the depths of the infinite? Mere megalomania on a colossal scale. Yet, solemn fooling for solemn fooling of the scientific order, I prefer the kind that does not lay itself out to thrive on the fears and the cupidities of men.

From that point of view geography is the most blameless of sciences. Its fabulous phase never aimed at cheating simple mortals (who are a multitude) out of their peace of mind or their money. At the most it has enticed some of them away from their homes; to death may be, now and then to a little disputed glory, not seldom to contumely, never to high fortune. The greatest of them all, who has presented modern geography with a new world to work upon, was at one time loaded with chains and thrown into prison. Columbus remains a pathetic figure, not a sufferer in the cause of geography, but a victim of the imperfections of jealous human hearts, accepting his fate with resignation. Among explorers he appears lofty in his troubles and like a man of a kingly nature. His contribution to the knowledge of the earth was certainly royal. And if the discovery of America was the occasion of the greatest outburst of reckless cruelty and greed known to history we may say this at least for it, that the gold of Mexico and Peru, unlike the gold of alchemists, was really there, palpable, yet, as ever, the most elusive of the Fata Morgana that lure men away from their homes, as a moment of reflection will convince any one. For nothing is more certain than that there will never be enough gold to go round, as the Conquistadores found out by experience.

I suppose it is not very charitable of me, but I must

say that to this day I feel a malicious pleasure at the many disappointments of those pertinacious searchers for El Dorado who climbed mountains, pushed through forests, swam rivers, floundered in bogs, without giving a single thought to the science of geography. Not for them the serene joys of scientific research, but infinite toil, in hunger, thirst, sickness, battle; with broken heads, unseemly squabbles, and empty pockets in the end. I cannot help thinking it served them right. It is an ugly tale, which has not much to do with the service of geography. The geographical knowledge of our day is of the kind that would have been beyond the conception of the hardy followers of Cortés and Pizarro; and of that most estimable of Conquerors who was called Cabeza de Vaca, who was high-minded and dealt humanely with the heathen nations whose territories he traversed in search of one more El Dorado. It is said they loved him greatly, but now the very memory of those nations is gone from the earth, while their territories, which they could not take with them, are being traversed many times every twenty-four hours by the trains of the Southern Pacific railroad.

The discovery of the New World marks the end of the fabulous geography, and it must be owned that the history of the Conquest contains at least one great moment—I mean a geographically great moment—when Vasco Núñez de Balboa, while crossing the Isthmus of Panama, set his eyes for the first time upon the ocean, the immensity of which he did not suspect, and which in his elation he named the Pacific. It is anything but that; but the privileged Conquistador cannot be blamed for surrendering to his first impression.

The Gulf of Panama, which is what he really saw with that first glance, is one of the calmest spots on the

waters of the globe. Too calm. The old navigators dreaded it as a dangerous region where one might be caught and lie becalmed for weeks with one's crew dying slowly of thirst under a cloudless sky. The worst of fates, this, to feel yourself die in a long and helpless agony. How much preferable a region of storms where man and ship can at least put up a fight and remain defiant almost to the last.

I must not be understood to mean that a tempest at sea is a delightful experience, but I would rather face the fiercest tempest than a gulf pacific even to deadliness, a prison-house for incautious caravels and a place of torture for their crews. But Balboa was charmed with its serene aspect. He did not know where he was. He probably thought himself within a stone's throw, as it were, of the Indies and Cathay. Or did he perhaps, like a man touched with grace, have a moment of exalted vision, the awed feeling that what he was looking at was an abyss of waters comparable in its extent to the view of the unfathomable firmament, and sown all over with groups of islands resembling the constellations of the sky?

But whatever spiritual glimpse of the truth he might have had, Balboa could not possibly know that this great moment of his life had added suddenly thousands of miles to the circumference of the globe, had opened an immense theatre for the human drama of adventure and exploration, a field for the missionary labours of, mainly, Protestant churches, and spread an enormous canvas on which armchair geographers could paint the most fanciful variants of their pet theory of a great southern continent.

I will not quarrel with the post-Columbian cartographers for their wild but, upon the whole, interesting inventions. The provocation to let one's self go was

considerable. Geography militant, which had succeeded the geography fabulous, did not seem able to accept the idea that there was much more water than land on this globe. Nothing could satisfy their sense of the fitness of things but an enormous extent of solid earth which they placed in that region of the South where, as a matter of fact, the great white-crested seas of stormy latitudes will be free to chase each other all round the globe to the end of time. I suppose their landsmen's temperament stood in the way of their recognition that the world of geography, so far as the apportioning of space goes, seems to have been planned mostly for the convenience of fishes.

What is surprising to me is that the seamen of the time should have really believed that the large continents to the north of the Equator demanded, as a matter of good art or else of sound science, to be balanced by corresponding masses of land in the southern hemisphere. They were simple souls. The chorus of armchair people all singing the same tune made them blind to the many plain signs of a great open sea. Every bit of coast-line discovered, every mountain-top glimpsed in the distance, had to be dragged loyally into the scheme of the Terra Australis Incognita.

Even Tasman, the best seaman of them all before James Cook, the most accomplished of seventeenth-century explorers and navigators that went forth to settle the geography of the Pacific—even Tasman, after coming unexpectedly upon the North Island of New Zealand, and lingering long enough there to chart roughly a bit of the coast and lose a boat's crew in a sudden affray with the Maoris, seemed to take it for granted that this was the western limit of an enormous continent extending away towards the point of South America.

Mighty is the power of a theory, especially if based on such a common-sense notion as the balance of continents. And it must be remembered that it is difficult for us now to realize not only the navigational dangers of unknown seas, but the awful geographical incertitudes of the first explorers in that new world of waters.

Tasman's journal, which was published not so very long ago, gives us some idea of their perplexing difficulties. The early navigators had no means of ascertaining their exact position on the globe. They could calculate their latitude, but the problem of longitude was a matter which bewildered their minds and often falsified their judgment. It had to be a matter of pure guesswork. Tasman and his officers, when they met on board the *Heemskirk*, anchored in Murderers' Bay, to consider their further course in the light of their instructions, did not know where any of the problematic places named in their instructions were, neither did they know where they themselves were.

Tasman might have sailed north or east, but in the end he decided to sail between the two, and, circling about, returned to Batavia, where he was received coldly by his employers, the honourable governor-general and the council in Batavia. Their final judgment was that Abel Tasman was a skilful navigator, but that he had shown himself "remiss" in his investigations, and that he had been guilty of leaving certain problems unsolved.

We are told that Tasman did not expect this armchair criticism; and indeed, even now, it seems surprising to an unprejudiced mind. It was the voyage during which, among other things, Tasman discovered the island by which his name lives on the charts, took first contact with New Zealand (which was not seen again

till 130 years afterwards), sailed over many thousands of miles of uncharted seas, bringing back with him a journal which was of much value afterwards for his exploring successors.

It may be he was hurt by the verdict of the honourable council, but he does not seem to have been cast down by it, for it appears that shortly afterwards he asked for a rise of salary—and, what is still more significant, he got it. He was obviously a valuable servant, but I am sorry to say that his character as a man was not of the kind to cause governors and councils to treat him with particular consideration. Except in professional achievement he is not comparable to Captain Cook, a humble son of the soil like himself, but a modest man of genius, the familiar associate of the most learned in the land, medallist of the Royal Society, and a captain in the Royal Navy.

But there was a taint of an unscrupulous adventurer in Tasman. It is certain that at various times his patron, the Governor Anthony van Diemen, and the honourable council in Batavia, had employed him in some shady transactions of their own, connected with the Japan trade. There is also no doubt that once he had, on his own responsibility, kidnapped an influential Chinaman who stood in the way of some business negotiation Tasman was conducting with the Sultan of Achin.

The Chinaman may have been a worthless person, but one wonders what happened to him in the end; and, in any case, the proceeding is open to criticism. Then in his old age he got into some disreputable scrape which caused the congregation with which he worshipped to ask him to resign his membership. Even the honourable council was startled, and dismissed him from

his employment, though characteristically enough not actually from their service. This action of the council fixes the character of the man better than any scandalous story. He was valuable, but compromising.

All these regrettable details came to my knowledge quite recently in a very amusing and interesting book, but I must confess that my early admiration for Tasman as one of the early fathers of militant geography has not been affected very much by it. Remiss or not, he had in the course of his voyages mapped 8,000 miles of an island which by common consent is called now a continent, a geologically very old continent indeed, but which is now the home of a very young commonwealth with all the possibilities of material and intellectual splendour still hidden in its future.

I like to think that in that portion of the Elysian Fields set apart for great navigators, James Cook would not refuse to acknowledge the civilities of Abel Tasman, a fellow seaman who had first reported the existence of New Zealand in the perplexed, bewildered way of those times, 130 years before Captain Cook on his second voyage laid for ever the ghost of the Terra Australis Incognita and added New Zealand to the scientific domain of the geography triumphant of our day.

No shade of remissness nor doubtful motive rests upon the achievements of Captain Cook, who came out of a labourer's cottage to take his place at the head of the masters of maritime exploration who worked at the great geographical problem of the Pacific. *Endeavour* was the name of the ship which carried him on his first voyage, and it was also the watchword of his professional life. *Resolution* was the name of the ship he commanded himself on his second expedition, and it

was the determining quality of his soul. I will not say that it was the greatest, because he had all the other manly qualities of a great man.

The voyages of the early explorers were prompted by an acquisitive spirit, the idea of lucre in some form, the desire of trade or the desire of loot, disguised in more or less fine words. But Cook's three voyages are free from any taint of that sort. His aims needed no disguise. They were scientific. His deeds speak for themselves with the masterly simplicity of a hard-won success. In that respect he seems to belong to the single-minded explorers of the nineteenth century, the late fathers of militant geography whose only object was the search for truth. Geography is a science of facts, and they devoted themselves to the discovery of facts in the configuration and features of the main continents.

It was the century of landsmen investigators. In saying this I do not forget the polar explorers, whose aims were certainly as pure as the air of those high latitudes where not a few of them laid down their lives for the advancement of geography. Seamen, men of science, it is difficult to speak of them without admirative emotion. The dominating figure among the seamen explorers of the first half of the nineteenth century is that of another good man, Sir John Franklin, whose fame rests not only on the extent of his discoveries, but on professional prestige and high personal character. This great navigator, who never returned home, served geography even in his death. The persistent efforts extending over ten years to ascertain his fate advanced greatly our knowledge of the polar regions.

As gradually revealed to the world this fate appeared the more tragic in this, that for the first two years the

way of the *Erebus* and *Terror* expedition seemed to be the way to the desired and important success, while in truth it was all the time the way of death, the end of the darkest drama perhaps played behind the curtain of Arctic mystery.

The last words unveiling the mystery of the *Erebus* and *Terror* expedition were brought home and disclosed to the world by Sir Leopold McClintock, in his book, "The Voyage of the *Fox* in the Arctic Seas." It is a little book, but it records with manly simplicity the tragic ending of a great tale. It so happened that I was born in the year of its publication. Therefore, I may be excused for not getting hold of it till ten years afterwards. I can only account for it falling into my hands by the fact that the fate of Sir John Franklin was a matter of European interest, and that Sir Leopold McClintock's book was translated, I believe, into every language of the white races.

My copy was probably in French. But I have read the work many times since. I have now on my shelves a copy of a popular edition got up exactly as I remember my first one. It contains the touching facsimile of the printed form filled in with a summary record of the two ships' work, the name of "Sir John Franklin commanding the expedition" written in ink, and the pathetic underlined entry "All well." It was found by Sir Leopold McClintock under a cairn and it is dated just a year before the two ships had to be abandoned in their deadly ice-trap, and their crews' long and desperate struggle for life began.

There could hardly have been imagined a better book for letting in the breath of the stern romance of polar exploration into the existence of a boy whose knowledge of the poles of the earth had been till then of an abstract formal kind as mere imaginary ends of the imaginary

axis upon which the earth turns. The great spirit of the realities of the story sent me off on the romantic explorations of my inner self; to the discovery of the taste of poring over maps; and revealed to me the existence of a latent devotion to geography which interfered with my devotion (such as it was) to my other schoolwork.

Unfortunately, the marks awarded for that subject were almost as few as the hours apportioned to it in the school curriculum by persons of no romantic sense for the real, ignorant of the great possibilities of active life; with no desire for struggle, no notion of the wide spaces of the world—mere bored professors, in fact, who were not only middle-aged but looked to me as if they had never been young. And their geography was very much like themselves, a bloodless thing with a dry skin covering a repulsive armature of uninteresting bones.

I would be ashamed of my warmth in digging up a hatchet which has been buried now for nearly fifty years if those fellows had not tried so often to take my scalp at the yearly examinations. There are things that one does not forget. And besides, the geography which I had discovered for myself was the geography of open spaces and wide horizons built up on men's devoted work in the open air, the geography still militant but already conscious of its approaching end with the death of the last great explorer. The antagonism was radical.

Thus it happened that I got no marks at all for my first and only paper on Arctic geography, which I wrote at the age of thirteen. I still think that for my tender years it was an erudite performance. I certainly did know something of Arctic geography, but what I was after really, I suppose, was the history of Arctic exploration. My knowledge had considerable

gaps, but I managed to compress my enthusiasm into just two pages, which in itself was a sort of merit. Yet I got no marks. For one thing it was not a set subject. I believe the only comment made about it to my private tutor was that I seemed to have been wasting my time in reading books of travel instead of attending to my studies. I tell you, those fellows were always trying to take my scalp. On another occasion I just saved it by proficiency in map-drawing. It must have been good, I suppose; but all I remember about it is that it was done in a loving spirit.

I have no doubt that star-gazing is a fine occupation, for it leads you within the borders of the unattainable. But map-gazing, to which I became addicted so early, brings the problems of the great spaces of the earth into stimulating and directing contact with sane curiosity and gives an honest precision to one's imaginative faculty. And the honest maps of the nineteenth century nourished in me a passionate interest in the truth of geographical facts and a desire for precise knowledge which was extended later to other subjects.

For a change had come over the spirit of cartographers. From the middle of the eighteenth century on the business of map-making had been growing into an honest occupation, registering the hard-won knowledge, but also in a scientific spirit recording the geographical ignorance of its time. And it was Africa, the continent out of which the Romans used to say some new thing was always coming, that got cleared of the dull imaginary wonders of the dark ages, which were replaced by exciting spaces of white paper. Regions unknown! My imagination could depict to itself there worthy, adventurous and devoted men, nibbling at the edges, attacking from north and south and east and west, conquering a bit of truth here and a bit of truth there,

and sometimes swallowed up by the mystery their hearts were so persistently set on unveiling.

Among them Mungo Park, of western Sudan, and Bruce, of Abyssinia, were, I believe, the first friends I made when I began to take notice—I mean geographical notice—of the continents of the world into which I was born. The fame of these two had already been for a long time European, and their figures had become historical by then. But their story was a very novel thing to me, for the very latest geographical news that could have been whispered to me in my cradle was that of the expedition of Burton and Speke, the news of the existence of Tanganyika and of Victoria Nyanza.

I stand here confessed as a contemporary of the Great Lakes. Yes, I could have heard of their discovery in my cradle, and it was only right that, grown to a boy's estate, I should have in the later sixties done my first bit of map-drawing and paid my first homage to the prestige of their first explorers. It consisted in entering laboriously in pencil the outline of Tanganyika on my beloved old atlas, which, having been published in 1852, knew nothing, of course, of the Great Lakes. The heart of its Africa was white and big.

Surely it could have been nothing but a romantic impulse which prompted the idea of bringing it up to date with all the accuracy of which I was capable. Thus I could imagine myself stepping in the very footprints of geographical discovery. And it was not all wasted time. As a bit of prophetic practice it was not bad for me. Many years afterwards, as second officer in the Merchant Service, it was my duty to correct and bring up to date the charts of more than one ship, according to the Admiralty notices. I did this work conscientiously and with a sense of responsibility; but it was not in the nature of things that I should ever

recapture the excitement of that entry of Tanganyika on the blank of my old atlas.

It must not be supposed that I gave up my interest in the polar regions. My heart and my warm participation swung from the frigid to the torrid zone, fascinated by the problems of each, no doubt, but more yet by the men who, like masters of a great art, worked each according to his temperament to complete the picture of the earth. Almost each day of my schoolboy life had its hour given up to their company. And to this day I think that it was a very good company.

Not the least interesting part in the study of geographical discovery lies in the insight it gives one into the characters of that special kind of men who devoted the best part of their lives to the exploration of land and sea. In the world of mentality and imagination which I was entering it was they and not the characters of famous fiction who were my first friends. Of some of them I had soon formed for myself an image indissolubly connected with certain parts of the world. For instance, western Sudan, of which I could draw the rivers and principal features from memory even now, means for me an episode in Mungo Park's life.

It means for me the vision of a young, emaciated, fair-haired man, clad simply in a tattered shirt and worn-out breeches, gasping painfully for breath and lying on the ground in the shade of an enormous African tree (species unknown), while from a neighbouring village of grass huts a charitable black-skinned woman is approaching him with a calabash full of pure cold water, a simple draught which, according to himself, seems to have effected a miraculous cure. The central Sudan, on the other hand, is represented to me by a very different picture, that of a self-confident and keen-eyed person in a long cloak and wearing a turban on

his head, riding slowly towards a gate in the mud walls of an African city, from which an excited population is streaming out to behold the wonder—Doctor Barth, the protégé of Lord Palmerston, and subsidized by the British Foreign Office, approaching Kano, which no European eye had seen till then, but where forty years later my friend Sir Hugh Clifford, the Governor of Nigeria, travelled in state in order to open a college.

I must confess that I read that bit of news and inspected the many pictures in the illustrated papers without any particular elation. Education is a great thing, but Doctor Barth gets in the way. Neither will the monuments left by all sorts of empire builders suppress for me the memory of David Livingstone. The words "Central Africa" bring before my eyes an old man with a rugged, kind face and a clipped, gray moustache, pacing wearily at the head of a few black followers along the reed-fringed lakes towards the dark native hut on the Congo headwaters in which he died, clinging in his very last hour to his heart's unappeased desire for the sources of the Nile.

That passion had changed him in his last days from a great explorer into a restless wanderer refusing to go home any more. From his exalted place among the blessed of militant geography and with his memory enshrined in Westminster Abbey, he can well afford to smile without bitterness at the fatal delusion of his exploring days, a notable European figure and the most venerated perhaps of all the objects of my early geographical enthusiasm.

Once only did that enthusiasm expose me to the derision of my schoolboy chums. One day, putting my finger on a spot in the very middle of the then white heart of Africa, I declared that some day I would go there. My chums' chaffing was perfectly justifiable.

I myself was ashamed of having been betrayed into mere vapouring. Nothing was further from my wildest hopes. Yet it is a fact that, about eighteen years afterwards, a wretched little stern-wheel steamboat I commanded lay moored to the bank of an African river.

Everything was dark under the stars. Every other white man on board was asleep. I was glad to be alone on deck, smoking the pipe of peace after an anxious day. The subdued thundering mutter of the Stanley Falls hung in the heavy night air of the last navigable reach of the Upper Congo, while no more than ten miles away, in Reshid's camp just above the Falls, the yet unbroken power of the Congo Arabs slumbered uneasily. Their day was over. Away in the middle of the stream, on a little island nestling all black in the foam of the broken water, a solitary little light glimmered feebly, and I said to myself with awe, "This is the very spot of my boyish boast."

A great melancholy descended on me. Yes, this was the very spot. But there was no shadowy friend to stand by my side in the night of the enormous wilderness, no great haunting memory, but only the unholy recollection of a prosaic newspaper "stunt" and the distasteful knowledge of the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration. What an end to the idealized realities of a boy's daydreams! I wondered what I was doing there, for indeed it was only an unforeseen episode, hard to believe in now, in my seaman's life. Still, the fact remains that I have smoked a pipe of peace at midnight in the very heart of the African continent, and felt very lonely there.

But never so at sea. There I never felt lonely, because there I never lacked company. The company of great navigators, the first grown-up friends of my early boy-

hood. The unchangeable sea preserves for one the sense of its past, the memory of things accomplished by wisdom and daring among its restless waves. It was those things that commanded my profoundest loyalty, and perhaps it is by the professional favour of the great navigators ever present to my memory that, neither explorer nor scientific navigator, I have been permitted to sail through the very heart of the old Pacific mystery, a region which even in my time remained very imperfectly charted and still remote from the knowledge of men.

It was in 1888, when in command of a ship loading in Sydney a mixed cargo for Mauritius, that, one day, all of a sudden, all the deep-lying historic sense of the exploring adventures in the Pacific surged up to the surface of my being. Almost without reflection I sat down and wrote a letter to my owners suggesting that, instead of the usual southern route, I should take the ship to Mauritius by way of Torres Strait. I ought to have received a severe rap on the knuckles, if only for wasting their time in submitting such an unheard-of proposition.

I must say I awaited the reply with some trepidation. It came in due course, but instead of beginning with the chiding words, "We fail to understand," etc., etc., it simply called my attention in the first paragraph to the fact that "there would be an additional insurance premium to pay for that route," and so on, and so on. And it ended like this: "Upon the whole, however, we have no objection to your taking the ship through Torres Strait if you are certain that the season is not too far advanced to endanger the success of your passage by the calms which, as you know, prevail at times in the Arafura Sea."

I read, and in my heart I felt compunctious. The season was somewhat advanced. I had not been

scrupulously honest in my argumentation. Perhaps it was because I never expected it to be effective. And here it was all left to my responsibility. My letter must have struck a lucky day in Messrs. H. Simpson & Sons' offices—a romantic day. I won't pretend that I regret my lapse from strict honesty, for what would the memory of my sea life have been for me if it had not included a passage through Torres Strait, in its fullest extent, from the mouth of the great Fly River right on along the track of the early navigators.

The season being advanced, I insisted on leaving Sydney during a heavy southeast gale. Both the pilot and the tug-master were scandalized by my obstinacy, and they hastened to leave me to my own devices while still inside Sydney Heads. The fierce southeaster caught me up on its wings, and no later than the ninth day I was outside the entrance of Torres Strait, named after the undaunted and reticent Spaniard who, in the seventeenth century, first sailed that way without knowing where he was, without suspecting he had New Guinea on one side of him and the whole solid Australian continent on the other—he thought he was passing through an archipelago—the Strait whose existence for a century and a half had been doubted, argued about, squabbled over by geographers, and even denied by the disreputable but skilful navigator, Abel Tasman, who thought it was a large bay, and whose true contours were first laid down on the map by James Cook, the navigator without fear and without reproach, the greatest in achievement and character of the later seamen fathers of militant geography. If the dead haunt the scenes of their earthly exploits, then I must have been attended benevolently by those three shades—the inflexible Spaniard of such lofty spirit that in his report he disdains to say a single word about the

appalling hardships and dangers of his passage; the pig-headed Hollander who, having made up his mind that there was no passage there, missed the truth by only fifty miles or so; and the great Englishman, a son of the soil, a great commander and a great professional seaman, who solved that question among many others and left no unsolved problems of the Pacific behind him. Great shades! All friends of my youth!

It was not without a certain emotion that, commanding very likely the first, and certainly the last, merchant ship that carried a cargo that way—from Sydney to Mauritius—I put her head at daybreak for Bligh's Entrance, and packed on her every bit of canvas she could carry. Windswept, sunlit empty waters were all around me, half-veiled by a brilliant haze. The first thing that caught my eye upon the play of green white-capped waves was a black speck marking conveniently the end of a low sandbank. It looked like the wreck of some small vessel.

I altered the course slightly in order to pass close, with the hope of being able to read the letters on her stern. They were already faded. Her name was *Honolulu*. The name of the port I could not make out. The story of her life is known by now to God alone, and the winds must have drifted long ago around her remains a quiet grave of the very sand on which she had died. Thirty-six hours afterwards, of which about nine were spent at anchor, approaching the other end of the Strait, I sighted a gaunt, gray wreck of a big American ship lying high and dry on the southernmost of the Warrior Reefs. She had been there for years. I had heard of her. She was legendary. She loomed up, a sinister and enormous *memento mori* raised by the refraction of this serene afternoon above the far-away line of the horizon drawn under the sinking sun.

And thus I passed out of Torres Strait before the dusk settled on its waters. Just as a clear sun sank ahead of my ship I took a bearing of a little island for a fresh departure, an insignificant crumb of dark earth, lonely, like an advanced sentinel of that mass of broken land and water, to watch the approaches from the side of the Arafura Sea. But to me it was a hallowed spot, for I knew that the *Endeavour* had been hove to off it in the year 1762 for her captain, whose name was James Cook, to go ashore for half an hour. What he could possibly want to do I cannot imagine. Perhaps only to be alone with his thoughts for a moment. The dangers and the triumphs of exploration and discovery were over for that voyage. All that remained to do was to go home, and perhaps his great and equable soul, tempered in the incessant perils of a long exploration, wanted to commune with itself at the end of its task. It may be that on this dry crumb of the earth's crust which I was setting by compass he had tasted a moment of perfect peace. I could depict to myself the famous seaman navigator, a lonely figure in a three-cornered hat and square-skirted laced coat, pacing to and fro slowly on the rocky shore, while in the ship's boat, lying off on her oars, the coxswain kept his eyes open for the slightest sign of the captain's hand.

Thus the sea has been for me a hallowed ground, thanks to those books of travel and discovery which have peopled it with unforgettable shades of the masters in the calling which, in a humble way, was to be mine, too; men great in their endeavour and in hard-won successes of militant geography; men who went forth each according to his lights and with varied motives, laudable or sinful, but each bearing in his breast a spark of the sacred fire.

THE *TORRENS:* A PERSONAL TRIBUTE

It is one of the pleasant surprises of my accumulated years to be still here when the shade of that beautiful ship is being evoked for a moment by a sea-travel magazine before the eyes of a public which does its sea travelling under very different conditions. Personally I cannot help thinking them not so much improved as needlessly sophisticated. However, that opinion of mine may be wildly wrong. I am not familiar with the demands of the spirit of the age. And, besides, I know next to nothing of sea travel. Even of the people who do that thing I know but few. My two years in the *Torrens* is my only professional experience of passengers; and though we—officers brought up in strenuous Indiamen and famous wool clippers—did not think much of passengers, regarding them as derogatory nuisances with delicate feelings which prevented one driving one's ship till all was blue, I will confess that this experience was most fortunate from every point of view, marking the end of my sea life with pleasant memories, new impressions, and precious friendships. The pleasant memories include the excellent ship's companies it was my luck to work with on each of my two voyages. But the *Torrens* had a fame which attracted the right kind of sailor, and when engaging her crew her chief officer had always a large and promising crowd to pick and choose from. There was in it always a certain proportion of men who had served in her before and were anxious to join again; for apart from her more brilliant qualities, such as her

speed and her celebrated good looks (which by themselves go a long way with a sailor), she was regarded as a "comfortable ship" in a strictly professional sense, which means that she was known to handle easily and to be a good sea boat in heavy weather. I cannot say that during my time in her we ever experienced really heavy weather; but we had the usual assortment of winds, up to "very strong gales" (logbook style), from various directions; and I can testify that, on every point of sailing, the way that ship had of letting big seas slip under her did one's heart good to watch. It resembled so much an exhibition of intelligent grace and unerring skill that it could fascinate even the least seamanlike of our passengers. A passage under sail brings out in the course of days whatever there may be of sea love and sea sense in any individual whose soul is not indissolubly wedded to the pedestrian shore.

There are, of course, degrees of landsmanism—even to the incurable. A gentleman whom we had on board on my first voyage presented an extreme instance of it. It, however, trenched upon the morbid in its excessive sea fright, which had its pathetic as well as comic moments. We had not been more than ten days out from Plymouth when he took it into his head that his shattered constitution could not stand the voyage. Note that he had not had as much as an hour of seasickness. He maintained, however, that a few more days at sea would certainly kill him. He was absolutely certain of it, and he pleaded day after day with a persistent agonized earnestness to be put ashore on the first convenient bit of land, which in this case would have been Teneriffe. But it is not so easy for a sailing ship to make an unexpected call without losing much time. Any deviation from a direct course of the voyage (unless in case of actual distress) would have invalidated

the ship's insurance. It was not to be thought of, especially as the man looked fit enough and the doctor had reported that he could not find the slightest evidence of organic disease of any sort. I was sorry for my captain. He could not refuse to listen to the man. Neither could he accede to his request. It was absurd. And yet! . . . who could tell? It became worse when he began to offer progressive bribes up to £300 or more. I don't know why I was called to one of those awful conferences. The even, low flow of argument from those trembling lips impressed me. He exhibited to us his bank passbook to prove that he had the means to buy his life from us. Our doctor stood by in grim silence. The captain looked dead-tired, but kept his temper wonderfully under the implication of callous heartlessness. It was I who could not stand the inconclusive anguish of the situation. It was not so long since I had been neurasthenic myself. At the very next pause I remarked in a loud and cheery tone, "I suppose I had better get the anchors ready first thing to-morrow." The captain glared at me speechlessly, as well he might. But the effect of the hopeful word "anchors" had an instantaneous soothing effect on our passenger. As if satisfied that there was at last somebody on his side he was willing to leave it at that. He went out.

I need not say that next day the anchors were not touched. But we sighted Teneriffe at thirty miles off, to windward—a towering and majestic shadow against the sky. Our passenger spent the day leaning over the rail, watching it till it melted away in the dusk. It was the confirmation of a death sentence for him, I suppose. He took it very well.

He gave me the opportunity to admire for many days an exhibition of consistent stoicism. He never repined.

He withdrew within himself. Though civil enough when addressed directly, he had very few words to give to anybody—as though his fund of speech had been expended while pleading in vain for his life. But his heart was burning with indignant anger. He went ashore unreadable but unforgiving, without taking notice of any one in the ship. I was the only exception. Poor futile creature as I was, he remembered that I at least had seemed to be "on his side." If I may take an Irishman's privilege, I will say that if he had really died he could not have abhorred the ship and everyone in her more. To have been exposed to live for seventy days under a sentence of death was a soul-searing outrage, and he very properly resented it to the last.

I must say that, in general, our passengers would begin very soon to look thoroughly at home in the ship. Its life was homely enough and far removed from the ideals of the Ritz Hotel. The monotony of the sea is easier to bear than the boredom of the shore, if only because there is no visible remedy and no contrasts at hand to keep discontent alive. The world contains, or contained then, some people who could put up with a sense of peace for three months. The feeling of close confinement in a sailing ship, with her propelling power working in the open air, and with her daily life going on in public sight, and presenting the varied interests of human character and individual exertion, is always less oppressive than in a steamer even many times her size. Besides, in a sailing ship there are neither vibration nor mechanical noises to grow actively wearisome. Another advantage was that the sailing passenger ships of that epoch were never crowded. The cabins of the *Torrens* had two berths each, but they were roomy and not overfurnished with all sorts of inadequate contrivances for comfort, so-called. I have seen the cabins

of a modern passenger steamship with three or four berths (their very couches being numbered) which were not half as big as ours. Not half as big—in fact, some of our passengers, who seized the opportunity of learning to dance the hornpipe from our boatswain (an agile professor), could pursue their studies in their own rooms. And that art requires for its practice more space than the proverbial swinging of a cat, I can assure you. Much more.

The *Torrens* was launched in 1875, only a few months after I had managed, after lots of trouble, to launch myself on the waters of the Mediterranean. Thus we began our careers about the same time. From the professional point of view hers was by far the greater success. It began early, and went on growing for fifteen years under the command of Captain H. R. Angell, whose own long career as a ship master was the greatest success of the three. He left her in 1890, and people said that he took his ship's luck away with him. The *Torrens* certainly lost some of her masts the very next voyage, by one of those sudden accidents for which no man can be made responsible. I joined her a year afterwards, on the 2d of November, 1891, in London, and I ceased to "belong to her," as the saying is (it was a wrench), on the 15th of October, 1893, when, in London Dock, I took a long look from the quay at that last of ships I ever had under my care, and, stepping round the corner of a tall warehouse, parted from her for ever, and at the same time stepped (in merciful ignorance) out of my sea life altogether.

I owed the opportunity of my close association with my famous contemporary to my acquaintance with Captain W. H. Cope, who succeeded Captain H. R. Angell. I had known him some years before, but only slightly, in a social way. I knew that he had been a

Conway boy, that he had had much varied service in mail boats and in the Hooghly pilot steamer before the command of the *Torrens* came in his way. But I had no reason to believe that he remembered me particularly. However, on hearing from his brother that I was ashore, he sent me word that the *Torrens* wanted a chief officer, as a matter that might interest me. I was then recovering slowly from a bad breakdown, after a most unpleasant and persistent tropical disease which I had caught in Africa while commanding a steamer on the River Congo. Yet the temptation was great. I confessed to him my doubts of my fitness for the post, from the point of view of health. But he said that moping ashore never did any one any good, and was very encouraging. It was clear that, as the saying goes, "my looks did not pity me," for he argued that, so far as appearance went, there did not seem to be anything the matter with me. And I suppose I could never have been half as neurasthenic as our poor passenger who wanted to be put ashore, for I lasted out for two voyages, as my discharges prove, though Mr. Basil Lubbock, in his book, "The Colonial Clippers," credits me with only one. But in the end I had to go (and even stay) ashore. Thus my famous contemporary outlived me at sea by many years, and if she had perhaps a harder life of it than I, it was at least untinged with unavailing regrets; and she escaped the ignominious fate of being laid up as a coal hulk, which so many of her sisters had to suffer. Mr. Lubbock, who can put so much interesting knowledge and right feeling into his studies of our merchant ships, calls her "The Wonderful *Torrens*." She was! Her fascinations and virtues have made their marks on the hearts of men. Only last year I received a letter from a young able seaman, whom I remembered having in my watch,

invoking confidently her unforgotten name. "I feel sure you must be Mr. Conrad, the chief officer, in whose watch I was when serving in the *Torrens* in 1891, and so I venture to write to you. . . ." A friendly, quiet, middle-aged seaman's letter, which gave me the greatest pleasure. And I know of a retired sailor (a Britisher, I suppose), in Massachusetts, who is making a model in loving memory of her who, all her life, was so worthy of men's loyal service. I am sorry I had no time to go to see him, and to gaze at the pious work of his hands.

It is touching to read in Mr. Lubbock's book that, after her transfer to the Italian flag, when she was taken to Genoa to be broken up, the Genoese shipwrights were so moved by the beauty of her lines and the perfections of her build that they had no heart to break her up. They went to work instead to preserve her life for a few more years. A true labour of love, if ever there was one!

But in the end her body of iron and wood, so fair to look upon, had to be broken up—I hope with fitting reverence; and as I sit here, thirty years, almost to a day, since I last set eyes on her, I love to think that her perfect form found a merciful end on the shores of the sunlit sea of my boyhood's dreams, and that her fine spirit has returned to dwell in the regions of the great winds, the inspirers and the companions of her swift, renowned, sea-tossed life, which I, too, have been permitted to share for a little while.

CHRISTMAS DAY AT SEA

Theologically Christmas Day is the greatest occasion for rejoicing offered to sinful mankind; but this aspect of it is so august and so great that the human mind refuses to contemplate it steadily, perhaps because of its own littleness, for which of course it is in no way to blame. It prefers to concentrate its attention on ceremonial observances, expressive generally of good will and festivity, such, for instance, as giving presents and eating plum-puddings. It may be said at once here that from that conventional point of view the spirit of Christmas Day at sea appears distinctly weak. The opportunities, the materials too, are lacking. Of course, the ship's company get a plum-pudding of some sort, and when the captain appears on deck for the first time the officer of the morning watch greets him with a "Merry Christmas, sir," in a tone only moderately effusive. Anything more would be, owing to the difference in station, not correct. Normally he may expect a return for this in the shape of a "The same to you" of a nicely graduated heartiness. He does not get it always, however.

One Christmas morning, many years ago (I was young then and anxious to do the correct thing), my conventional greeting was met by a grimly scathing "Looks like it, doesn't it?" from my captain. Nothing more. A three-days' more or less thick weather had turned frankly into a dense fog, and I had him called according to orders. We were in the chops of the Channel, with the Scilly Islands on a vague bearing

within thirty miles of us, and not a breath of wind anywhere. There the ship remained wrapped up in a damp blanket and as motionless as a post stuck right in the way of the wretched steamboats groping blindly in and out of the Channel. I felt I had behaved tactlessly; yet how rude it would have been to have withheld the season's greetings from my captain!

It is very difficult to know what is the right thing to do when one is young. I suffered exceedingly from my gaucherie; but imagine my disgust when in less than half an hour we had the narrowest possible escape from a collision with a steamer which, without the slightest warning sound, appeared like a vague dark blot in the fog on our bow. She only took on the shape of a ship as she passed within twenty yards of the end of our jibboom, terrifying us with the furious screeching of her whistle. Her form melted into nothing, long before the end of the beastly noise, but I hope that her people heard the simultaneous yell of execration from thirty-six throats which we sent after her by way of a Christmas greeting. Nothing more at variance with the spirit of peace and good will could be imagined; and I must add that I never saw a whole ship's company get so much affected by one of the "close calls" of the sea. We remained jumpy all the morning and consumed our Christmas puddings at noon with restless eyes and straining ears as if under the shadow of some impending marine calamity or other.

On shore, of course, a calamity at Christmas time would hardly take any other shape than that of an avalanche—avalanche of unpaid bills. I think that it is the absence of that kind of danger which makes Christmas at sea rather agreeable on the whole. An additional charm consists in there being no worry about presents. Presents ought to be unexpected things.

The giving and receiving of presents at appointed times seems to me a hypocritical ceremony, like exchanging gifts of Dead Sea fruit in proof of sham good-fellowship. But the sea of which I write here is a live sea; the fruits one chances to gather on it may be salt as tears or bitter as death, but they never taste like ashes in the mouth.

In all my twenty years of wandering over the restless waters of the globe I can only remember one Christmas Day celebrated by a present given and received. It was, in my view, a proper live-sea transaction, no offering of Dead Sea fruit; and in its unexpectedness perhaps worth recording. Let me tell you first that it happened in the year 1879, long before there was any thought of wireless messages, and when an inspired person trying to prophesy broadcasting would have been regarded as a particularly offensive nuisance and probably sent to a rest-cure home. We used to call them madhouses then, in our rude, cave-man way.

The daybreak of Christmas Day in the year 1879 was fine. The sun began to shine sometime about four o'clock over the sombre expanse of the Southern Ocean in latitude 51; and shortly afterwards a sail was sighted ahead. The wind was light, but a heavy swell was running. Presently I wished a "Merry Christmas" to my captain. He looked still sleepy, but amiable. I reported the distant sail to him and ventured the opinion that there was something wrong with her. He said, "Wrong?" in an incredulous tone. I pointed out that she had all her upper sails furled and that she was brought to the wind, which, in that region of the world, could not be accounted for on any other theory. He took the glasses from me, directed them towards her stripped masts resembling three Swedish safety matches, flying up and down and waggling to and fro ridiculously in that heaving and austere wilderness of

countless water-hills, and returned them to me without a word. He only yawned. This marked display of callousness gave me a shock. In those days I was generally inexperienced and still a comparative stranger in that particular region of the world of waters.

The captain, as is a captain's way, disappeared from the deck; and after a time our carpenter came up the poop ladder carrying an empty small wooden keg, of the sort in which certain ship's provisions are packed. I said, surprised, "What do you mean by lugging this thing up here, Chips?"—"Captain's orders, sir," he explained shortly.

I did not like to question him further, and so we only exchanged Christmas greetings and he went away. The next person to speak to me was the steward. He came running up the companion stairs: "Have you any old newspapers in your room, sir?"

We had left Sydney, N.S.W., eighteen days before. There were several old Sydney *Heralds*, *Telegraphs*, *Bulletins* in my cabin, besides a few home papers received by the last mail. "Why do you ask, steward?" I inquired naturally. "The captain would like to have them," he said.

And even then I did not understand the inwardness of these eccentricities. I was only lost in astonishment at them. It was eight o'clock before we had closed with that ship, which, under her short canvas and heading nowhere in particular, seemed to be loafing aimlessly on the very threshold of the gloomy home of storms. But long before that hour I had learned from the number of the boats she carried that this nonchalant ship was a whaler. She was the first whaler I had ever seen. She had hoisted the Stars and Stripes at her peak, and her signal flags had told us already that

her name was: "*Alaska*—two years out from New York—east from Honolulu—two hundred and fifteen days on the cruising ground."

We passed, sailing slowly, within a hundred yards of her; and just as our steward started ringing the breakfast bell the captain and I held aloft, in good view of the figures watching us over her stern, the keg, properly headed up and containing, besides an enormous bundle of old newspapers, two boxes of figs in honour of the day. We flung it far out over the rail. Instantly our ship, sliding down the slope of a high swell, left it far behind in our wake. On board the *Alaska* a man in a fur cap flourished an arm; another, a much be-whiskered person, ran forward suddenly. I never saw anything so ready and so smart as the way that whaler, rolling desperately all the time, lowered one of her boats. The Southern Ocean went on tossing the two ships like a juggler his gilt balls, and the microscopic white speck of the boat seemed to come into the game instantly, as if shot out from a catapult on the enormous and lonely stage. That Yankee whaler lost not a moment in picking up her Christmas present from the English wool clipper.

Before we had increased the distance very much she dipped her ensign in thanks and asked to be reported "All well, with a catch of three fish." I suppose it paid them for two hundred and fifteen days of risk and toil, away from the sounds and sights of the inhabitated world, like outcasts devoted, beyond the confines of mankind's life, to some enchanted and lonely penance.

Christmas Days at sea are of varied character, fair to middling and down to plainly atrocious. In this statement I do not include Christmas Days on board

passenger ships. A passenger is, of course, a brother (or sister), and quite a nice person in a way, but his Christmas Days are, I suppose, what he wants them to be: the conventional festivities of an expensive hotel included in the price of his ticket.

OCEAN TRAVEL

THE one statement that can safely be advanced about travelling at sea is that it is not what it used to be. It is different now elementally. It is not so much a matter of changed propelling power; it is something more. In the old days, under the machinery of sails, the distinguished and the undistinguished travellers (of whom there were not so very many) were wafted to distant parts of the world by the movement of variable air currents. Now the travelling multitudes are taken to their destination because of the invariable resistance of water to the screwing motion of the propeller, with which fire (that other element) has a lot to do. The whole affair of progress across the seas has become much more complicated and much more precise on its physical side. It has grown also into a marvel.

But a marvellous achievement is not necessarily interesting. It may render life more tame than perhaps it should be. I do not mean that any marvel of applied science can tame the wild spirit that lurks in all men, and of which the proofs are not far to seek. It only makes the condition of our pilgrimage less exciting.

The whole psychology of sea travel is changed. Formerly a man setting out on a sea voyage broke away from shore conditions and found in the ship a new kind of home. This applied even to such comparatively short passages as across the Atlantic. But now a man (especially if setting out for the United States) brings the conditions of shore life with him on board, and finds in his ship the usual sort of hotel, with its at-

tempts at all kinds of sham comforts, all the disadvantages of gregarious life, with the added worry of not being able to get away from it for a certain number of days. The only comfort is to be found in the assurance that the number of days is not great and that, barring accidents, it is fixed. There is a definite date to look forward to—the date of release from that more or less luxurious prison any ship must be to any passenger.

That every passenger (even in the biggest and most hotel-like Atlantic ferries with their territorial names) wishes to escape there can be not the slightest doubt. He may say what he likes, but it is a fact of human nature. He looks forward to his release much as any prisoner. The modern traveller has never the time to get into an acquiescent mood. The sham shore conditions which the shipping companies try to create for him stand in the way, too. The hold of the land (which is his natural element) is on him all through the passage, and he suffers from a subtle disharmony between his natural tastes and his surroundings.

It was otherwise with the old-time traveller under sail: he had to become acclimatized to that moral atmosphere of ship life which he was fated to breathe for so many days. He was no dweller in an unpleasantly unsteady imitation of a Ritz Hotel. He would before long begin to feel himself a citizen of a small community in special conditions and with special interests which gradually ceased to be secret to him, and in the end secured his sympathies. The machinery of his propulsion, the picturesque activities of the men of the sea, lay open to his sight and appealed to his sympathies.

In the course of my sea life, a time when it never occurred to me that I myself might be a passenger some

day, I was for a couple of years officer of a sailing passenger ship out of the Port of London. This gave me the opportunity to watch that process of acclimatization of which I have spoken, in a group of about sixty persons of various ages and temperaments, some travelling for their health and others only for rest—which they indubitably secured in our passages that averaged about eighty days. Part of our passengers, those from the Midlands generally, used to come on board in London Dock, while others, those from the South and from London itself preferred to join the ship in Plymouth, where we had to call in order to embark the live stock for the voyage. Of that feathered and four-footed company the most important item was the milch-cow which joined the ship mainly "for the benefit of the children," as the advertisements had it. It was the last living thing that came on board, already boxed and in its travelling stall, and displaying a most praiseworthy composure even while spinning in midair at the foreyard arm before being landed on the foredeck against the mast, to which its straitened habitation was secured for the passage with lashings of chain and rope fit to withstand the heaviest weather we were likely to encounter.

There, on fine mornings (and there are more fine mornings at sea than have ever been dreamt of in a landsman's philosophy), the ship's children, some controlled by nursemaids, others running loose, trooped forward to pay a visit to their cow, which looked with mild big eyes at the small citizens of our sea community with the air of knowing all there was to know about them.

All this may sound very primitive, but it had a charm and an intimacy of a settled existence no modern steamship with its long barren alleyways swept by the wind

and decorated with the name of promenade decks can give. The modern passenger may be able to walk a good many miles in his ship in the course of the day, but this is the only thing which differentiates him from the bales of goods carried in the hold—this, and the power of swallowing the food which is presented to him at regular intervals. He is carried along swiftly and fed delicately, but the other lived the life of his ship, that sort of life which is not sustained on bread (and *suprême au volaille*) alone, but depends for its interest on enlarged sympathies and awakened perceptions of nature and men.

I have seen old maiden ladies develop during a passage nice discrimination in the matter of steering. They had their favourite helmsmen. Elderly business men would become good judges of the set of the sails and acquire a seaman's eye for the aspects of the weather—and almost all, men and women, became reconciled to the vast solitude of the sea untroubled by the sound of the world's mechanical contrivances and the noise of its endless controversies. The silence of the universe would lie very close to the sailing ship, with her freight of lives from which the daily stresses and anxieties had been removed, as if the circle of the horizon had been a magic ring laid on the sea. No doubt the days thus enchanted were empty, but they were not so tedious as people may imagine. They passed quickly, and, if they brought no profit or excitement, I cannot help thinking that they were not wasted. No! They were not wasted.

OUTSIDE LITERATURE

HAVING been prompted by a certain literary suggestion to reflect upon the nature of Notices to Mariners, I fell to examining some of my old feelings and impressions which, strictly professional as they were, have yet contributed in the end towards the existence of a certain amount of literature; or at any rate of pages of prose. The Notices to Mariners are good prose but I think no critic would admit them into the body of literature. And it is only as compositions in prose that I believe myself competent to speak of them. And first let me thank God that they do not belong to imaginative literature. It would be dreadful if they did. An imaginatively written Notice to Mariners would be a deadly thing. I mean it literally. It would be sure to kill a number of people before its imaginative quality had been appreciated and suppressed. That their style must be clear and concise, and the punctuation of the ordinary kind, would not necessarily militate against their being regarded as literature. The Maxims of La Rochefoucauld are concise enough. But they open horizons; they plumb the depths; they make us squirm, shudder, smile in turn; and even sigh—at times; whereas the prose of the Notices to Mariners must do nothing of the kind.

And it doesn't. A mariner detected shuddering or sighing over a Notice to Mariners would simply (to speak in unliterary language) be not fit for his job. All means of acting on man's spiritual side are forbidden

to that prose. In those compositions which are read as earnestly as anything that ever came from printing press, all suggestion of Love, of Adventure, of Romance, of Speculation, of all that decorates and ennobles life, except Responsibility, is barred. What we expect from them is not suggestion but information of an ideal accuracy, such as you do not find in the prose of the works on science, which is mainly imaginative and often solemnly mystifying. That is why some quite decent men are moved to smile as they read it. But there is no mystification in the language of truth contained in the Notices to Mariners. You would not want to smile at them. No decent man would. Even Mr. Punch, to whom as a great burlesque poet nothing is supposed to be sacred, and who has been seen lately taking liberties with the explosive atom, would not dream of making fun out of Notices to Mariners. Mr. Punch knows better. He knows that for an inspired poet who sees the mystic relations of sublunary matters, Notices to Mariners are things to be read reverently. They are like declarations of a minutely careful Providence. They can be imagined as dictated in a quiet voice by the angel who, in the words of the song, sits aloft to watch over poor Jack. They belong to a prose which, if certainly not immortal, is revelatory to its own generation.

Addressed to a special public, limited to a very definite special subject, having no connection with the intellectual culture of mankind, and yet of some importance to a civilization which is founded on the protection of life and property, that prose has only one ideal to attain, to hold on to: the ideal of perfect accuracy. You would say that such an ideal may easily be captured by a steady, prosaic mind devoting itself for a few minutes (the Notices to Mariners are short)

every day to the task of composition. Why, yes! But what about misprints—the bane of authors?

And then the absences. I mean the absences of mind. It is a fact that the most pedestrian mind will sometimes take a flight from the office where it works (I suppose Notices to Mariners are written in some sort of office) toward subjects of poetic fancy, its children, its lady love, its glass of beer, and such other things interesting to its mortal envelope. I often wondered what the author of Notices to Mariners looks like. I have tried to represent him to myself as a monk, a man who has renounced the vanities of the world, and for preference belonging to the order of Trappists who are bidden to remember death—*memento mori*—and nothing else. A sobering thought! Just suppose the author of Notices to Mariners acquiring convivial habits and sitting down to write a Notice in that happy frame of mind when nothing matters much and one letter of the alphabet is as good as another. For myself—who am not convivial in that sense and have written a varied lot of prose with a quite ridiculous scrupulosity and an absurd seriousness—I don't mind confessing that if I were told to write a Notice to Mariners I would not pray perhaps—for I have my own convictions about the abuse of prayer—but I would certainly fast. I would fast in the evening and get up to write my Notice to Mariners at four o'clock in the morning for fear of accidents. One letter is so soon written for another—with fatal results.

It happened to me many years ago to endanger the course of my humble career at sea simply by writing the letter W instead of the letter E at the bottom of a page full of figures. It was an examination and I ought to have been plucked mercilessly. But in consideration, I believe, of all my other answers being

correct I was handed that azimuth paper back by the examiner's assistant, with the calm remark, "You have fourteen minutes yet." I looked at the face of the clock; it was round like the moon, white as a ghost, unfeeling, idiotic. I sat down under it with the conviction of the crushing materiality of time, and calling in my mind the assistant examiner a sarcastic brute. For no man could have gone over all those figures in fourteen minutes. I hope my exasperated consternation at this check could not be detected. It was funny even to myself. Then, just at the moment when my sinking heart had touched bottom, I saw the error staring at me, enormous, gross, palpable. I traced hastily a capital E over the W and went back to the desk with my sheet of blue paper in a still shaky hand. The assistant hardly glanced at it before he let it drop, and I saw then that in my lack of comprehension it was I who had been an unqualified brute. For in his remark about the fourteen minutes he had clearly tried to give me a hint. He was a charming young man, obviously poor, with an intelligent, as if suffering, face. Not exactly sickly, but delicate. A sea voyage would have done him good. But it was I who went to sea —this time bound to Calcutta.

And it was in Calcutta, a few months afterwards, that one morning my captain on going ashore saw me busy about the decks and beckoned to me in that way ship masters have, or used to have. I mean ship masters who commanded their ships from truck to keelson as it were, technically and spiritually, in motion and at rest, and through every moment of their life, when the seaman's calling was by the mere force of its conditions more vocational than it can be at the present day. My ship master had that way of beckoning. What way? Well—all I can say of it is that one dropped

everything. I can't describe it better. So I dropped whatever I was doing and he said: "You will find a Notice on the cabin table. Go in and enter it on the proper Admiralty sheet. Do it now." Which I hastened to do.

That examination, the issue of which had hung on a capital letter, had caused me to be officially certified as fit to undertake that particular duty; and ever since then my familiarity with Notices to Mariners, which are not literature, went on growing through a course of years, up to the moment when stepping ashore for the last time I lost all touch with the most trusted kind of printed prose. Henceforth I had to begin (while totally unprovided with Notices to Authors) to write prose myself; and the pains I took with it only my Maker knows! And yet I never learned to trust it. I can't trust it to this day. We who write prose which is not that of the Notices to Mariners are forgotten by Providence. No angel watches us at our toil. A dreadful doubt hangs over the whole achievement of literature; I mean that of its greatest and its humblest men. Wasn't it "Papa Augier" who, being given a copy of "Hamlet," glanced through it expertly and then dropped it with the dry remark: "*Vous appelez ça une pièce, vous?*" The whole tragedy of art lies in the nutshell of this terrifying anecdote. But it never will occur to anybody to question the prosaic force of the author of Notices to Mariners, which are not literature, and his fidelity to his honourable ideal—the ideal of perfect accuracy.

LEGENDS

To WATCH the growth of a legend is a sad occupation. It is not so much because legends deal with people and things finished and done with; that they spring, as it were, from amongst the bones of dead men. Flowers (as I have seen myself) will do that too. That's all in the order of nature, and both flowers and legends are upon the whole decorative, which is all to the good.

I have nothing against a legend twining its tendrils fancifully about the facts of history or the tables of statistics (which can be fanciful too, though they can never be made very decorative). They spring from noble soil, they are a form of memory which we all like to leave behind us, that lingers about the achievement of men who have had their day and the vanished forms of things which have served the needs of their time.

One could welcome that fine form of imaginative recognition of the past with nothing worse than the gentle melancholy which the passage of time brings in its train if it were not disfigured by touches of fatuity of which no legend is wholly free, because I suspect that those who record its tales as picked out on the lips of men are doing it in a spirit of love. And that is only right and proper. But love is uncritical. It is an enthusiastic state seeing romance in what may be not true to the spirit of its subject, so to speak. And thus the false which is often fatuous also creeps into a worthy or even noble story.

Or even into a holy story. The Golden Legend itself. The legend of saints and their miracles is an awful ex-

ample of that danger—as any one who turns over a few pages of it may see. Saintliness is made absurd by the presentation of the miraculous facts themselves. It lacks spirituality in a surprising way.

Yes, fatuity lurks in all legends fatally by the effect of our common credulity. However, the legend I have in my mind has nothing to do with saints—but with beings at first sight infinitely different, but whose lives were hard (no saint, I take it, ever slept on a bed of roses) if not exactly ascetic, and if not hermit-like, yet as far removed from the commonest amenities and the simplest affections which make life sweet, and as much removed from the material interests of this world as the most complete spiritual renunciation could make it.

Perhaps nobody could guess from what precedes that I have sailors in my mind. I do not mean to be irreverent if I insist that in a temporal sense there was much that was edifying in their lives. They did not work miracles, to be sure, but I have seen them repeatedly do all that men can do for their faith—if it was only the faith in their own manhood. And that is something, surely. But there was something more in it, something larger—a fidelity to the demands of their calling which I verily believe was for all of them I knew, both afloat and ashore, vocational quite as much in its way as any spiritual call a man's nature has ever responded to. And all that for no perceptible reward in the praise of man and the favour of gods—I mean the sea gods, an indigent, pitiless lot, who had nothing to offer to servants at their shrine but a ward in some hospital on shore or a sudden wedding with death in a great uproar, but with no gilding of fine words about it. *La mort sans phrases.*

In all this there is material for a fine legend, if not

of saintly virtues, then of a consistent display of manhood. And the legend will not be long, for the last days of sailing ships were short if one thinks of the countless ages since the first sail of leather or rudely woven rushes was displayed to the wind. Stretching the period both ways to the utmost, it lasted from 1850 to 1910. Just sixty years. Two generations. The winking of an eye. Hardly the time to drop a prophetic tear. For the pathos of that era lies in the fact that when the sailing ships and the art of sailing them reached their perfection, they were already doomed. It was a swift doom, but it is consoling to know that there was no decadence.

That era has, however, had its historians, such as Mr. Basil Lubbock, for instance, whose devotion to the glory of the ships and the merits of the men has the character of one of those romantic passions that last a lifetime. He is now of the brotherhood initiated with all the awful ceremonies of a Cape Horn passage. He speaks with much knowledge. And there is Miss C. Fox-Smith, in whom I verily believe the quintessence of the collective soul of the latter-day seaman has found its last resting-place and a poignant voice before taking its flight for ever from the earth. Truth itself speaks in her verse—I can safely say, since I (surprising thought) have one foot, at least, in that irrecoverable phase of old sea life for which their piety and their talents have done so much.

It is on that ground that I would remonstrate with Mr. Lubbock against the admission into one of his books of sea chronicles of a tale which would degrade the character of any legend. The facts of a legend need not be literally true. But they ought to be credible and they must be in a sort of fundamental accord with the nature of the life they record, that is with the char-

acter of their subject matter. The subject of the Golden Legend is, in fact, the celebration of a miracle-working holiness, and the subject of any sea legend must be the celebration of the era of fair ships sailed with consummate seamanship—an era that seems as distant now as the age of miracles.

The history of the latter days of clipper ships and their men may be said to begin with the *Marco Polo* and the man who commanded her. His name was Forbes, and he is not a figure to stand at the head of a sea legend. He lacked balance in his character. Luck alone made him, and at the first adversity he collapsed. But without going into the details of his short career, I am sure I am doing good service to his memory by trying to purge his record of the most fatuous tale that ever cropped up in any legend of the sea.

As adopted, alas! (but the best of us may err) by Mr. Basil Lubbock, it runs that Forbes used to padlock the sheets of the *Marco Polo's* sails—one reviewer explaining kindly "to guard against the timid members of a crew," a priceless phrase, whatever it may mean. What is a "timid member" and how do you recognize him? Anyhow, I am sure he is a fitting person to play his part in that padlock story.

I wonder who was the man to tell it? He must have been an ironmonger trying for a new outlet for his wares. And to what sort of audience? Personally I would have been afraid to tell it to the Horse-Marines —that mysterious corps which is famed for its capacity to swallow anything in the way of a yarn.

[This article was left unfinished at Conrad's death.]

THE UNLIGHTED COAST

I CAME ashore bringing with me strongest of all, and most persistent, the impression of a great darkness. I do not mean darkness in a symbolic or spiritual sense. Indeed, one couldn't come from contact with the watchers of that darkness, and the workers therein, otherwise than spiritually strengthened. What I mean is the fact itself, the fact of darkness spread over the land and water of old civilization such as wrapped up early mariners' landfalls on their voyages of exploration. To him who had been accustomed to behold after long sea passages the shadowy contours of the English coast illuminated festally, interminably, unfailingly, as if for a sleepless feast or for sleepless toil, the impression was very powerful—like a revelation of some deeper truth. Fires in the night are the sign of mankind's life to an eye at sea. There were no such signs anywhere. Not a gleam. And yet life had never before perhaps in the history of that unlighted island known such an intense consciousness of itself. No! Life had not departed that sombre shore. It was only its old sense of security that was no longer there.

It had a strange air of finality. The land had turned to a shadow. Of all scourges and visitations against which mankind prays to Heaven, it was not pestilence that had smitten that shore dark; it was war; with sudden death, another of that dreaded company, full of purpose, in the air, on the water, and under the water. Breathing the calm air of the night, looking at this placid sea gleaming faintly, here and there, as

still water will do in the dark, it was as hard to believe in the existence of this prowling death as in the dauntless, tense life of that obscured land. That mere shadow—big with fate.

One seemed to have one's being in the very centre of illusory appearance. The very silence, so profound around us as to seem boundless, and harmonizing marvellously with the spirit of the hour, was not true to the usual meaning it conveys to a human mind, that of being cut off from communication with its kind.

For just as I was remarking to the officer by my side that surely neither Cæsar's galleys nor the ships of the Danish rovers had ever found on their approach this land so absolutely and scrupulously lightless as this—just then a voice behind us was heard: "I've here two messages I have just picked up."

It was our wireless man. That shadow emitting no sound waves, no waves of light, was talking to its watchers at sea; filling the silence with words pregnant with the truth, the naked, ugly truth of the situation.

And the man with two white pieces of paper very noticeable in his hand said: "It's our station at X speaking."

For reasons which had nothing to do with its efficicency we could not use our wireless installation very often, and he was immensely pleased at having picked up something for the first time in two days. We went below to de-code the messages. The little cabin, in contrast with the variously shaded and toned darkness we had left, seemed scandalously over-lighted.

Although I helped to de-code these messages I don't remember the exact words of their concise phrases; but the first was an inquiry, apparently directed at large into space, relating to a hostile submarine seen off the coast not many hours before. The other was

a request addressed by name to a ship at sea for a report on some floating mines discovered in a certain position within the last twenty-four hours. The great motionless shadow was talking to its watchers, small shadows flitting here and there on the obscure gleams of the smooth sea veiled in the unmoral night that from its very nature favours aggression rather than vigilance, without regard to the merits of the case.

These were good samples of the talk that flows on unheard in sunshine, in starlight, under the clouds. War talk. But how different from the war talk we hear on the lips of men (and even great men) which often seems but talk round the war, obscuring the one and only question: To be or not to be—the great alternative of an appeal to arms. The other, the grouped-letters war talk, almost without sound and altogether without fury, is full of sense, of meaning, and single-minded purpose; inquiries, information, orders, reports. Words, too. But words in direct relation to things and facts, with the feeling at the back of it all of the correct foresight that planned and of the determination which carries on the protective work.

We all know that a true defence is at the point of the sword; but the shield has its part to play too in defensive work. This work had been planned by the navy in anticipation of the conditions that would arise. I know that praise often is but more or less conscious impertinence. But, after all, this is seamen's work, and half a lifetime at sea may perhaps justify me in expressing the highest possible sense of the navy's clear-eyed foresight in planning, and the judgment, resolution, tact, and knowledge of men in getting the planned system to work, from the first critical days to its full development of to-day, steadily, without haste, yet with that speed which is inherent in the force, un-

swerving purpose, and in the resolute handling of any problem under the sun.

It is mainly the officers and men of the various branches of the R.N.R. who, under the high command of naval officers, have been entrusted with the manifold duties of that simple work of protection and watchfulness. It was the navy who trained them to it, and as the period had in each case to be short, the general efficiency with which the work is done speaks well for the naval method. But it is also a high testimony to the capacity, adaptability, and the whole-souled earnestness of the officers of the Merchant Service who hastened to join, some called up, others volunteering without hesitation from all the points of the compass and from the uttermost ends of the Empire.

Much has been said already of these men and of their activities; of the circumstances, the conditions, the incidents of the task. I may perhaps later say something too, more in the nature of a personal impression than of detailed description. As to the work itself, all I want to point out now is that seen from outside it presents in its various branches the aspect of a nerve-straining drudgery. And in that outward aspect there is a proportion of truth. From its very nature it must be work without glamour. No great moments can be expected in it. Yet, rare as drops of rain in a desert, such moments have been vouchsafed to some of the faithful. As I trace these words I have in my mind the most unexpected, the most unforeseen instance of the kind. An enormous drop in a parched and stressful monotony of duty.

On the morning I heard the tale, the pier at one of our "bases," with its central line of neat shed-like buildings and the great signal bridge at the end (recalling the superstructure of a battleship), had been

for a moment swept clean of all life by a rain squall as effectually as by a point-blank broadside of shrapnel shell.

My companion and I took cover in the wardroom, a good-sized apartment lined with varnished match-boarding. A heavy table occupied the middle. The officer of the watch, a silent, detached figure, sat at a writing desk reading a note, while a young bluejacket, cap in hand, waited for the answer. Two R.N.R. officers smoking by the fire greeted us. Another sat at some distance on a chair placed against the wall near a window. He took no notice of our arrival.

But the officer with me murmured with a nod in his direction: "This is our Zeppelin-strafer."

I said: "No! Have you that, too, in your lot?"

"Yes. He'll tell you all about it."

I was introduced with a word or two of comment to "our Zeppelin-strafer." There was no halo around his head. He was young, so young that he must have belonged to the third generation of those who had gone to sea since my time; one of those who began that life after 1900. A seaman of the twentieth century! And yet he was no stranger to me. The memories of my twenty sea years crowded upon me, memories of faces, of temperaments, of expressions. And looking at him, all I could say to myself was:—How like! We sat down side by side near the window. He was in no haste to begin. He belonged to the shy, silent type —and how like!

It's an odious thing to have to write in "descriptive" fashion of men with whom one talked like a friend and had found acceptance as one of themselves. If he sees these lines I hope he will forgive me. It's very likely that my impressions set down truthfully are altogether untrue. We were but half an hour together,

and when we parted and he closed the door of that room behind him I felt that he was as utterly gone from me as though he had stepped out in the middle of the Pacific.

He began to talk to me with a sort of reluctance, hesitatingly, till I mentioned to him that I had been to sea much longer than himself, if not so recently. He knew I was some sort of writing man, and was ready to be civil, but after that remark of mine his articulation became easier. Not much, though. He looked down on the ground, glancing at me only now and again, and spoke in a low tone with unexpected pauses. The best way in which I can characterize that narrative is by saying that he delivered it to me with the aspect, the bearing of a man who broods over the event in silence.

He was making his way on a foggy day back to his base after a spell of duty outside. His craft mounted one gun; and without going into unnecessary description I may best give an idea of the size of his command by saying that, when he was reposing, the breech of the gun was within four feet of his head as it lay on his pillow. For reasons that need not be stated, his vessel did not move then more than about three knots through the water—which was smooth. There's seldom much wind with thick weather. On that occasion there was a very light breeze, enough to help the fog at its usual pranks of thinning and thickening, opening and shutting, lifting in patches and closing down suddenly—quicker than a wink, sometimes.

He was walking up and down his vast deck when, turning aft, he saw the fore-end of a Zeppelin emerge into misty view out of an apparently thicker layer of fog. From then on for succeeding minutes he moved no more than a ship's timber. The apparition took

him completely unawares because he had not heard any noise in the air before. Directly, however, he caught sight of the Zeppelin he heard the noise of the engine very plainly.

As soon as he regained the power of speech he uttered the words "Action . . . Zeppelin . . . Astern," in a cautious whisper. An unnecessary precaution. But he told me that at first the "enormous thing seemed right on top of us!" In fact, it was not anything so near as that. It was coming up astern but a little on one side and, he noticed, steering a course which would cross obliquely his wake and bring the monster very close indeed—within 500 yards perhaps.

For whatever reason, it was flying low, so low that he did not need to throw his head up much to watch its steady progress. And there followed for him such moments of unforgettable anguish, something like the anguish of a man whose eternal salvation would depend on the soundness of his judgment.

The problem was how to deal with this gigantic piece of luck. For if he opened fire too soon the chances were that the German would swerve and get away, or, climbing overhead, would descend on him as low as he pleased and bomb him out of existence. His gun was a very good weapon of its kind, but it was not an anti-aircraft gun and had only a limited amount of elevation. And there was also the possibility that, utterly unconscious of the tiny speck lost in the shimmer of the thin fog layer below, the Zeppelin would alter its course at any moment for some purpose of its own.

What worried and discomposed him was the insistent whispering of his skipper, who had crept to his elbow and was entreating hoarsely not to waste a moment, "to let the beggar have it now, sir. Let him have it." The German meantime held on. Ordering the skipper

away he had the fortitude, though his heart was in his mouth all the time, to hold out till the Zeppelin crossed his wake and exposed the greater part of its side. . . . "And then," he said, "we started to plug it into him as fast as we could load. And every shot was a hit."

He looked at me with strangely troubled eyes. "It was impossible to miss . . . you know," he added in a lowered voice.

Whether conscious or unconscious before of the microscopic strafer below, Fritz must have had the surprise of his life. The record shock of Zeppelin history. His dismay was boundless, something very like panic up there became visible to the eyes below.

. . . "I could see three or four of them running along," went on the low voice. "I saw them quite plainly. If I had had half-a-dozen men with rifles on my deck we could have got every single one of them."

The Zeppelin swung off wide and with its engines working noisily, made off without more ado. Its own speed or the drift of denser fog blowing over turned it into a mere dark blur swiftly. As long as the faintest shadow of it remained visible the fire was kept up. Then it ceased. A profound silence ensued. It was all over. He was gone.

It was, however, possible that he might return overhead and take his revenge. But before the strafers on deck had the time to exchange glances of wonder, apprehension, or inquiry, while they were still, in fact, staring into the upper fog, the shadow reappeared nearer than before aslant in the white space, sliding downwards stern first, its nose tilted up at a perilous angle.

"Of course we opened on him instantly," he went on. "And do you know what he did then?"

At this point he looked at me again, and after a little

gasp went on, as if unwillingly, "he dumped all his bombs overboard. The whole lot of them at once."

The resulting explosion was something terrific. He felt as if his little craft were blown clean out of the water and at the same time hit by a tidal wave. And in the awful commotion, uproar, and black smoke the Zeppelin shot up and vanished for good.

"You must have made him very sick," I said.

"He looked very sick indeed," said the young strafer quietly.

"I wonder what became of him?"

"Hard to say. There was a report in the papers some time afterwards. . . . Damaged Zeppelin coming to the ground in Norway. . . . I sometimes think . . ."

He did not finish the sentence. He had been eighteen months of long days and longer nights at his protecting work, out and in, fair or foul, never seeing anything to reward his strained, hopeful vigilance, and sometimes for days seeing nothing at all. For the North Sea is a big place, as our coasters say: so big that there may be half-a-dozen ships out looking for you because you are a little late in returning (as it happened to a man), and you will come in innocently, having seen no one, unseen by anybody—which is vexing for the anxious searchers.

Eighteen patient, unfaltering months, and then this ten gloriously crowded minutes—is that much? The whole affair probably did not last so long.

Rare, like drops of water in a desert, are such opportunities for the watchers of the lightless shore. And to this one Fortune had not been fickle, but simply outrageous. The drop had merely brushed past his lips so unskilled in speech. He had talked to me in all friendliness, for which I am duly grateful; yet he left

me with the impression that had he been permitted to taste the full flavour, his official report would have remained, of his own choice, his first and last utterance. I fancy, somehow, that rather than talk of luck so immense that there could be no fit words for it in the world, he would have preferred to brood over it in adequate silence.

THE DOVER PATROL

THE worth of a sentiment lies in the sacrifices men will make for its sake. All ideals are built on the ground of solid achievement, which in a given profession creates in the course of time a certain tradition, or, in other words, a standard of conduct. The existence of a standard of conduct in its turn makes the most improbable achievement possible, by augmenting the power of endurance and of self-sacrifice amongst men who look to the past for their lessons and for their inspiration.

The story of the achievement of the Dover Patrol is merged in the greater proud record of the navy's protective part played with simplicity and self-sacrifice in the Great War of the twentieth century; yet that story has its own features, its own particular atmosphere, and its own importance.

The opening years of the nineteenth century had their Great War, too. Longer in its duration, it was carried on with less animosity. It was less in the nature of a struggle for dear life, and, except in its spirit, it was less intensely national. It did not involve in its toils the whole population. The issues at stake were as great, perhaps, but did not appear in such definite shapes to the great mass of the people which suffered its hardships and gave up its sons to its struggles. In its most obvious aspect that war, like the one of our day, was waged against an attempt at universal dominion. But it must be admitted that it was

also a war against the revolt of new-born ideas represented by a great and dominant figure issued from a revolution and taking its own fatally conquering way amongst the imperfectly awakened nations of Europe. It was a struggle of the old certitudes against a man embodying the new force of subversive beliefs. It ran its course, as momentous, if less ruthless, than the deadly struggle in which the Dover Patrol has played its part. When it ended it left the world as weary, indeed, as it is to-day, but much less unsettled in its thoughts and emotions about the spiritual value of its monstrous experience. Men's ideas were simpler then, their sentiments less complex. Their desires and hopes, as poignant perhaps, remained still obscure. The instinctive reaction against all the cruel negations a war imposes on humanity had a less resentful character; and men's judgment of the attained issue was less embittered by the effort they had been called upon to make. Yet their personal feelings were much like our own.

When the hour of peace struck in 1815 there must have been on board the King's ships anchored in the Downs, patrolling in the Channel, in the squadrons on distant stations, and in others cruising off nearly every port of northern Europe—there must have been the feeling that there never would be such a war again; a feeling of relief, mingled, no doubt, with a half-acknowledged sense of regret for the occupation that was gone. The great question arising at the end of every prolonged effort made by mankind—And now—what next? asked without misgivings in the consciousness of an accomplished duty—was not free from a certain uneasiness as to the days that would follow in other and unknown conditions. For a whole generation had grown from boyhood to maturity with no knowledge

of peace conditions, and unperturbed by moral doubts of its warlike achievement.

Amongst the men of the Dover Patrol assembled to see the unveiling of the memorial to their own unforgettable dead there will be also a feeling of regret for those days that are past, regret of the strenuous life with its earnest purpose, its continuity of risk, its sense of professional efficiency, its community of desperate toil; regret even of those moments of extreme bodily fatigue associated with that feeling of spiritual exaltation which enabled them each in his station, from the Admiral commanding to the youngest member of a small drifter's crew, to defy the enmity of nature and the hostility of men.

Nobody would dream of apportioning shares of importance in the great task of the navy, so varied in its unity, so diverse in its singleness of aim and its invariable purpose. But it is a fact that amongst all those activities directed to the same end, exposed to the same risk, making the same appeal, and entered upon with the same courage, the work of the Dover Patrol was very special work. The Dover Patrol held the southern exit of the North Sea in the same way in which the Grand Fleet may be said to have held its northern entrance; and the greatness of its responsibility may be appreciated from the one dominant fact: that on that Patrol rested the safety of our communications with the army in France, and that one of its achievements was the safe passage across the Channel of about seven million men without a single instance of failure, in the presence of a superior enemy established in force within easy striking distance on the flank of the line; an enemy superior in numbers and material, holding in his hands every element of successful attack except for just a portion, an ever so small portion, of that sea

spirit animating the officers and men of the Dover command who stood in his way—including the very workers on shore in repair workshops and fitting-out sheds.

There was never a greater accord of fearless executive energy and skilled hard work than in the Dover Patrol. From the point of view of its spiritual harmony it was worthy to hold the extreme right wing of the great sea defence. Of its material success we all know by now; we have all heard of the millions of men transported to and fro across the Straits, of miles of nets laid along the coasts and kept in repair in defiance of heavy seas and long-range batteries, of mines swept along routes equalling in length twelve times the circumference of the globe, of merchant fleets of a hundred ships and more shepherded every day through the Downs. The eloquence of arithmetical figures as applied to the merits of the Dover Patrol is overwhelming indeed; but no figure of rhetoric can render justice to the quiet resolution of the men making up for the inadequacy of the means, the unavoidable inadequacy of the means for which only the force of circumstances was responsible, for which no past government can be blamed, since no one could have guessed the enormous scale of material requirements.

The means were inadequate, woefully inadequate; and thus the only trumps the Admiral of the Dover Patrol held in his hand at every turn of the dreadful game were the physical endurance, the inborn seamanship, the matter-of-fact, industrious, indefatigable enthusiasm with which every one under his orders threw his very soul into his appointed task. Threw it in and kept it there. It was no momentary effort. For the anxious days of the Dover Patrol were to be many, its nights full of dangers, its problems exacting, its duty calls incessant, and its men after all but the flesh and

blood of our common humanity. Their souls were the only trumps in the desperate game, as he who was in command must have felt at every moment of night and day. It was a great and successful game, but it must be confessed that for more than half the time it was a game of bluff. It came off at every deal, England's usual luck, that this time, too, has not failed her at the hour of need! And England may well be proud of her traditional luck in the character of her children serving her at sea, on shore, and in the air.

The activities of the Dover Patrol were of many kinds, but there were three imperative duties to which all its energies had to be devoted: the safety of the troop-transport service, the protection of merchant shipping, the closing of the Channel exit against the German submarines. One need not insist on their vital importance for the army and the nation or on the deadly danger of even a temporary failure. The work had to be carried out with the slenderest conceivable means, with obsolete torpedo destroyers, and with unarmed drifters, in the presence of an enemy of superior force and possessing an infinite advantage in his power to choose his own time for an attack of the most deadly kind. Those three purely naval problems required incessant hard work, incessant risk, and incessant vigilance. The routine of the Dover Patrol included the boarding of ships, the regulation of traffic along the cleared war lane, the laying of net and mine barrages on the Belgian coast and across the Channel, their guard and maintenance in all weathers and in all circumstances, with always present in all minds the sense of numerical inferiority in a mission the failure of which might have well brought about something not very far from national disaster. In such conditions the stress

put upon the fortitude of every individual was bound to be very great.

The Dover Patrol was equal to it. Its devotion, expressed in a plodding, dogged perseverance, stood the test of frequent severe losses in men and ships, and of continuous severe strain on its mental and physical faculties as a whole. The tale of the Dover Patrol is the tale of a small nucleus of ships and crews of the Royal Navy, and round it of a great number of other men and other vessels, mostly fisher-folk and fisher-craft, with the addition of Merchant Service men and of R.N.R. and R.N.V.R. officers and ratings. Though, properly speaking, not belonging to the fighting service, all those men lived up to their old tradition and were found sufficient for the trust reposed in them.

They were found sufficient. No praise could be more adequately expressed, when one looks at the magnitude of the trust and the arduous character of the operations it imposed upon the men and the ships of the Dover command. Originating in the simple Downs Boarding Flotilla, under the orders of the naval officer commanding at Harwich, the Dover Patrol developed an independent existence and by the establishment of fortified German naval bases on the coast of Flanders acquired an importance in the scheme of naval defence which cannot well be exaggerated. The reinforcements and supplies for the army, the food for the country, demanded the safety of the Straits. Had the enemy probed the weakness of the Dover Patrol and broken with his overwhelming force through that thin defence to invade the waters of the Channel, it would have been a disaster, the fatal consequences of which imagination even now shrinks from contemplating.

The great sailor-like qualities of the Dover Patrol,

the consummate seamanship displayed in the planning and execution of its incessant operations, its steady manner of meeting deadly emergencies, its cool vigilance in the presence of an ever-menacing situation, may well compel the admiration of any man who knows something, however little, of the demands of sea service. To the risks of actual warfare the crews of the drifters watching over the barrage nets were often helplessly exposed. But nothing could dismay either the naval or the auxiliary branches of the Dover Patrol. These men were concerned about the perfection of their work, but the sudden flash of German guns in the night troubled them not at all. As, indeed, why should it? In their early days some of them had but a single rifle on board to meet the three four-inch guns of German destroyers. Unable to put up a fight and without speed to get away, they made a sacrifice of their lives every time they went out for a turn of duty; they concentrated their valour on the calm, seamanlike execution of their work amongst the exploding mines and bursting shells. It was their conception of their honour, and they carried it out of this war unblemished by a single display of weakness, by the slightest moment of hesitation in the long tale of dangerous service.

In this simple way these seamen, professional and unprofessional, naval and civilian, have earned for themselves the memorial erected to their faithful labours. The record of the Dover Patrol's work contains a great moral and a good many professional lessons for their children and their successors; the incalculable value of a steady front, the perfecting of nets, the exact process of laying barrages in a tideway, the evolving of an ingenious method for night bombardments, and of a system of long-range firing—a whole great store of new ideas and new practice laid up for future use. But in

truth that which in the last instance kept the German forces from breaking disastrously on any dark night into the Channel, and jeopardizing the very foundations of our resisting power, was not the wonderfully planned and executed defences of nets and mines, but the indomitable hearts of the men of the Dover Patrol.

MEMORANDUM

On the Scheme for Fitting Out a Sailing Ship for the Purpose of Perfecting the Training of Merchant Service Officers Belonging to the Port of Liverpool

Assuming that the generous public spirit of the Liverpool shipowners will find the capital necessary for the building and equipping a southern-going sailing ship to perfect the training of the officers of the Mercantile Marine, I conceive that the cost of running such a ship—that is: wages, upkeep, repairs, general surveys and insurance—ought to be covered by what she may earn as a cargo carrier on the training voyages which will be planned for her.

Here I will submit to the originators of the scheme that a voyage to an Australian port (including New Zealand) out by the Cape and round by the Horn would be the best for such a purpose. My reasons are: the healthy climate of that part of the world, the number of the meteorological regions traversed which will develop sound judgment as to weather, the comparative facility of the voyage, combined with a great variety of general experience which a round trip of that sort will offer. The length of passages need not be an objection; the complete training of a young seaman ought to include the experience of many days together at sea between water and sky. It would have a spiritual and practical value for him even if he is destined never to

be out of sight of land for more than a few days in his future professional life.

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Assuming then that the ship would be expected to be self-supporting (and no more) it is my deliberate opinion that her size should be limited strictly to the tonnage which will enable her under modern conditions to pay her expenses. I venture to suggest (however shocking it may appear to the minds of men who own and manage fleets of large steamships) fourteen to fifteen hundred tons, or as near thereto as is consistent with the earning of her expenses, as the proper tonnage for the ship. I admit that I don't know what the best freight-carrying capacity of a ship is at the present time; but I beg the Committee charged with the elaboration of the scheme to allow me to expose my reasons for what I advance in support of the above opinion. I must premise here that in all that I am going to say I will be drawing on my own experience as a seaman trained to his duties under the British flag and, in regard to the performance of such duties, having a good record for more than sixteen years of sea life, both in sail and steam.

My contention is that for sea-going qualities, ease of handling, quickness in manœuvring, and even in point of actual safety, if caught in a bad position, nothing can beat a, say, 1400-ton ship, designed so as to have a dead weight carrying capacity of about once and a half her registered tonnage. The same remark may be applied to the comfort in bad weather when, it must be remembered, the men managing her propelling machinery must remain exposed on the deck instead of being sheltered under it. The latest big sailing ship (in so far as she still exists) is generally in

that respect what the sailors graphically describe as a mere "bathing-machine," her enormous main deck, especially when running before a heavy sea, being always full of water and extremely uncomfortable, besides being dangerous for that very reason. Also, the great length necessarily given to those big ships of three thousand tons and over makes them clumsy to handle, anything but quick in manœuvre, and renders them rather helpless, from their very size, in case of any serious damage either aloft or about the rudder. It is also to be remarked that a ship's quick response in manœuvring develops a corresponding activity and smartness in her crew.

I beg the gentlemen concerned with this scheme to understand that I am not speaking as a literary person indulging his fancy but as the usual sort of Merchant Service officer who has served in all sorts of ships and draws upon his ordinary experience; with this advantage, only, that he had time to think about it and meditate over its lessons. Pursuing the matter further, I wish also to touch on the question of the ship's appearance. In a steamship the increase of size certainly makes for good looks, adding to the inherent beauty of the lines an expression of power and dignity which arouses one's admiration. It is not so with a sailing vessel. Hardly any ship of over 2000 tons I have ever seen escaped giving an impression which may be best defined by the word "overgrown"; and I have a good many in my memory to whom nothing but the sailors' graphic phrase "a big, clumsy brute" could in justice be applied. Now, in view of the end which the Liverpool shipowners have in equipping a sailing ship, that is to *perfect* the training of officers for their fleets, certain ideal elements must be taken into consideration. It is very necessary that those

boys should grow attached to their ship (an easy thing for a sailor to do), be proud of her individual appearance, of her sea qualities, of their association with her; and that they should remember their period of training, not as a horrible grind in discomfort and without personal gratification of any kind, but as a great time in their lives; an experience it has been their privilege as seamen of the Port of Liverpool to go through; a time to be remembered with pleasure and pride, somewhat as an old public-school boy looks back at his old school, the beauty of its old buildings and the prestige of its traditions. The greatest achievements of Merchant Service seamen have been performed in ships of between 900 to 1600 tons, in the way of record passages (which were then the exclusive merit of seamen), of feats in clever handling and in the bringing in of disabled ships to port by their own seamanship and determination without any outside assistance. And if the objection is made that I am advocating things hopelessly out of date, then my answer will be that in this scheme of *perfected* training associated so closely with men's *morale* and with old traditions, the out-of-dateness argument does not apply. On the practical side that objection may be met by pointing out that those boys are not to be trained for officers of modern sailing ships, but to be *perfected* as future officers of the finest modern steamships. Therefore, what is important is to give them for their training not the most modern sailing ship (which in any case is doomed and need not be taken into consideration at all), but to select for them the *best* period of sailing-ship practice and service.

One more consideration I want to present to the originators of the scheme, which is this: that in a very large sailing ship there is always a tendency to sup-

ply her (on account of the difficulty of manning her effectively) with a lot of labour-saving appliances. This brings me to the second postulate which, after the size of the ship, I am most anxious to submit for consideration. And it is this:

II

That there should be no labour-saving appliances in the shape of steam winches and so on; and that the hoisting of the sails, the working of the boats, and the general physical work of the sailor's calling should be done by man power, of which, of course, the cadets on board would be the principal part. A vertical boiler, mainly for the purpose of heaving up the anchors, may be advisable; but the windlass should be of the kind which can be also worked by the crew by means of a capstan on the forecastle-head.

My reasons for this insistence on the use of man power are as follows: First of all, there is no necessity for anything else. With forty boys out of any given batch on board (Mr. Holt mentions eighty as the number and on that point I will offer a remark later) of an advanced physical development and certain weight of body, together with a ship's crew of, say, twelve A. B.'s, four petty officers, and some other ratings, the officers ought to be able to handle a ship, of the size and rig I am thinking of, like a plaything. Secondly, it may be laid down as an axiom that no labour done on board ship in the way of duty is either too hard or in any way unworthy of the best effort and attention or, so to speak, beneath the dignity of any youngster wishing to fit himself to be a good officer. Thirdly, there is undoubtedly something elevating in physical work into which one puts all one's heart in association with others and for a clearly understood purpose. Apart

from that it will bring these youths into a more intimate contact with the propelling machinery of the ship and they will, so to speak, learn the feel of it. It mustn't be forgotten that seamen's work was never looked upon or had the character of mere slavish toil, as some branches of labour on shore tend to become. In its essence life at sea has been always a healthy life, and part of that was owing to the very nature of the physical exertions required. I affirm with profound conviction that sailing-ship life is an excellent physical developer. I have repeatedly seen a delicate youngster brought on board by an anxious relative change out of all knowledge into a stout youth during a twelve-month's voyage. I have never seen an apparently delicate boy break down under the conditions of the sea life of my time. They *all* improved. Moreover, any physical work intelligently done develops a special mentality; in this case it would be the sailor mentality; surely a valuable acquisition for a sea officer either in sail or steam.

III

The sailing ship, then, I have in my eye (something very much like the Liverpool *Sierras* which were afloat between '80 and '90) would be a hull of between 1400 and 1500 tons register with a dead weight capacity of over 2000 tons, in which case it would be sufficient for her to have three square-rigged masts. If the tonnage of the ship is raised to 2000 tons register then there must be four masts, of which the aftermost one would be rigged fore and aft. In any case, I would advocate for the training ship a long poop and a very roomy forecastle head; the poop, if the vessel is three-masted, extending as far as the main rigging; and the object being to reduce the area of the main deck as

much as possible. This would tend to make the ship much more comfortable. Ships with long poops are always the driest in all weathers and safest for the individuals having to move about the decks in heavy weather. The main deck would have on it a deck house in the space between the fore coaming of the main hatch and the foremast; leaving a clear passage across at each end and having wide alleyways on each side. The house would contain the vertical boiler for raising steam for the windlass; the accommodation for the ship's crew and the berths of the ship's petty officers. Under the forecastle head there would be space at the sides for various storerooms, or the electric light plant, if carried, could be installed on one side and the storerooms on the other. All that, however, may be left to the skill and ingenuity of the designer, once the actual size of the ship and the number of people she has to carry, all told, has been decided upon.

In this matter I have a certain competence because I was for 2 years chief officer of a sailing passenger ship running between London and Adelaide and I believe the very last of her kind, with the exception perhaps of the *Macquarrie* (later training ship for New Zealand merchant cadets), where the experience of a comparatively large number of persons on board ship could be obtained by the sailing-ship officer. She was only 1270 tons register and the greatest number of people I had on board of her was 113 all told. She had room for 50 passengers when full and we had perforce to carry a lot of live stock, a milk cow for the children and so on; yet her space was not inconveniently crowded, and no passenger ever complained of cramped accommodation, and generally they made the round trip in her. She carried outwards a general cargo and in Adelaide loaded the usual Australian cargo, for the

most part wool. Her poop was 78 feet long over all; under that we carried eleven double passenger cabins on each side, two cabins for the mates, a large pantry amidships and a doctor's berth and surgery. The accommodation for the captain consisted of two stern cabins, both very roomy, of which one was his state-room and the other was planned and furnished as a sitting room, which he never used at sea, sharing the saloon with the passengers. This saloon contained two long tables at which all the people berthed under the poop deck could sit down to meals. I think that this arrangement could be adopted with advantage in the cadet ship under contemplation. The artificial lighting of the *Torrens* being oil and candles required extreme vigilance, but assuming the Liverpool cadets berthed in cabins as above, if electric light is to be introduced the lamps could be set in the partitions between them, so that each lamp would light two cabins. The long saloon would be the common room for navigational studies and meals, the electric lighting of that space, however economically applied, would be always better than the lamp-lighting of that ship which was sufficient for the passengers to read, write, or play their games in the evening. There were never any complaints on that score. The captain of a training ship would probably use all his accommodation at sea too, messing by himself. Apart from that it seems to me that the man entrusted with the responsible position of commanding such a training ship would wish to keep in as close touch with the boys as conformable with the preservation of proper merchant-ship discipline; and that he would not find the nearness of his cabin to the bulk of them either inconvenient or irksome.

The accommodation on the poop, being sufficient only for about 44 cadets, could be duplicated to a cer-

tain extent below, aft, on the twin deck, and be made accessible by means of the after hatch, fitted with a proper companionway. There may be some difficulty with the supply of daylight down there and in that respect the berths below would be inferior, but as there would be no doubt different grades among the boys in the way of seniority and ratings, a boy would be moved by seniority or on promotion from below to above at some time or other in the course of his training. This would be something to look forward to; and in this connection I would remark that the comfort of the boys should be cared for strictly within the limits of due regard for their health, physical development and opportunity for study, and no more. The greatest simplicity in such arrangements compatible with health and self-respect should be the note; and I believe that no boy properly constituted and wishing to be a seaman will resent such a system.

I suppose that as regards the boys, at least, a three-watch system will be introduced; though I must confess that I have never seen a boy hurt by the watch and watch duty which in my time all of them had to go through during the four years of their apprenticeship. In that case, however, the utmost vigilance and alertness in the time of duty should be exacted by the officer of the watch from the cadets at their various stations, whether at the lee helm with the helmsman, or on the lookout with an A. B. of the ship's crew, or about the decks at the different sheets, tacks and braces they may be specially told off to. The disadvantage of the three-watch system is that the cadet will be always on duty at the same hours. Some system of shifts should be introduced if only to change the boys in rotation from one watch to another; for the habit of wakefulness is also a matter of training, and the boys should be

accustomed to keep their alertness at all periods of the night. I would suggest that the senior cadets (especially those who had obtained the rating of cadet petty officer) should be employed as assistants to the officer of the watch to the fullest possible extent; and when sufficiently advanced be entrusted with the trimming of the yards, the taking in or setting of light sails in manageable weather, and so on. The progression of stations will be, I imagine, from waist-cadets to mizzen-topmen, through main and fore to forecastlemen, which last would be selected from the strongest and the most advanced, during the training course of eighteen months. I imagine that the training ship with some luck in her weather and with quick dispatch at either end, could do two round voyages in that time. The *Torrens*, a fast ship, could have done it with ease, though as a matter of fact she made one voyage every eleven months, but then she would lie for weeks on the berth, both in London and Port Adelaide.

That ship carried four anchors, that is, three bowers and one stream, besides one big and one small kedge, and this is the number that would be sufficient for the training ship. Of course, the anchors would be stock anchors. In this connection I wish to remark that if the anchor is hove up by steam the catting and fishing should be done by hand under all circumstances with the help of the forecastle-head capstan. As to the sails, I assume that she would carry (unless she is to be really a very big ship) six topsails, three topgallantsails, three royals, four or three headsails, the usual number of staysails; and, I suggest, two courses. The crossjack course may be done away with. In my first year on board the *Torrens* we abolished that sail mainly out of regard for the feelings of the passengers who had their chairs placed all about the mizzenmast; and it made no

difference whatever to the speed of the ship. The fair weather mizzen staysail, which was a particularly big sail, replaced it perfectly at all trims, from sharp up to two points abaft the beam. With the wind aft the crossjack was merely a nuisance.

I advocate the ship carrying single topgallantsails as a matter of traditional practice and training. For the same reason I would suggest that the clew lines of the upper sails and the clew-garnets of the courses should be led to the quarters of the yard and not to the yardarm. The proper furling of a sail, with a smooth bunt and tightly rolled yardarms, was a great point in the habits of smartness and proper merchant-ship discipline. It was also a matter of correct seamanship, because a sail that was not properly furled in bad weather was likely to free itself and blow away from the yard. The shifting of clew lines to the yardarms was really a dodge of undermanning, since it is obvious that with no bunt to the sail less men are required to make some sort of furl of it. The training ship, however, will be anything but undermanned, and unless she were very big there would be plenty of hands in her to furl the three topgallantsails together. I have repeatedly seen the four boys of the *Torrens* with the addition of one able seaman furl the main topgallantsail of that ship in a stiff breeze. In a ship of 1600 tons six boys and two able seamen ought to master a topgallantsail in almost any weather. When I joined the *Torrens* the then master of her, Captain Cope (an old Conway boy), fell in at once with my suggestion to shift the clew lines back to the quarters of the yard, on the ground that the ship was manned well enough to do things properly.

In regard to boats, I will again refer to my experience of the *Torrens* (a sailing ship with a hundred souls on board). We carried in her, aft, two quarter-boats on

davits abreast the mizzen rigging. They were well above water, toggled-in against a spar so as to be disengaged by one single jerk on a lanyard (their tackle falls being always coiled clear on deck), and in other respects were ready for lowering instantly. Owing to the shortness of a merchantman's crew the orders as to these boats were that in an emergency the nearest men (up to four) were to get into her at once, the officer of the watch and the midshipman of the watch attending to the falls. The only real test of quickness we had happened in the daytime and in light weather, when the ship was luffed up till the sails lifted and one of the quarter-boats was lowered to pick up a parrot which had flown overboard. Not having been on deck at the time I don't know how long all this took, but the parrot survived the experience; so we must have been quick enough to have saved a child, for instance, of which we always had several on board.

On the skids abaft the mainmast we carried two bigger spare boats bottom up and not ready for lowering. But the principal boats of the ship were two very roomy lifeboats, carried on skids forward, just abaft the fore rigging. They stood in chocks and their davits were fore-and-afted at sea, but the lowering tackles were always hooked and the falls coiled in tubs secured on the top of the deck house, of which I have spoken before. Those lifeboats were fitted out ready to "abandon ship," with sea anchors, oil bags, oars, mast and sail, blue lights, water beakers and ship's bread in tins. Their chocks were held in position by a bolt in the usual way and the ship's carpenter was instructed when making his report to me in the morning to report: "Davits and bolts free." When the bolt was knocked out a lift of three inches was all that was necessary to swing out those lifeboats. Now and again

I had a test, generally at eight o'clock in the morning at the change of watches, and I managed to bring things to a point when the whole operation took seven minutes from the time of the order: "Both watches. Out lifeboats," to the moment when they were swung back and landed again in their chocks; the second mate taking charge of the starboard and the senior apprentice (acting third) of the port side. This for a merchant ship was quite as good as could be expected and would have met almost any emergency short of sudden disaster. In the Channel and between the chops of the Channel and the Western Islands (either homeward or outward bound), on the first appearance of thick weather with a moderate sea, it was a standing order that the officer of the watch immediately after calling the captain was to swing these boats outboard ready for lowering. In that position they remained, weather permitting, till the fog cleared.

I have entered into those details because from the nature of things there can be very few sailing-ship officers left now who have had the experience of the care of upwards of a hundred people on board a 1300-ton ship. How far the boys should be given an insight into the stowage of a large single hold I am not prepared to say. The proper stowage of a sailing ship was an extremely important part of her preparation for sea, affecting her sailing powers, the comfort of everybody on board, and even her absolute safety. The stowage of a subdivided hold of a large steamship is from the very nature of things a much less nice matter. It is also different in its nature, since the order of the ports of call is a paramount consideration in the disposition of a steamship's cargo. But an insight into the old conditions cannot do any harm and may be found useful on occasion.

Next I venture to offer the suggestion that the ship should have no auxiliary propulsion of any kind. Let her *be* a sailing ship. I don't exactly know how this may affect the rate of insurance, but I assure you that a very few years ago, well within the life of the man who is addressing you now, nobody thought a sailing ship less safe than a steamship. A ship's safety, apart from the "Act of God," rests in the hands of the men who are aboard of her, from the highest to the lowest in their different degrees. Machinery, *per se*, will not make a ship more safe, and the saved space would be useful for other purposes.

The ship will have, of course, to make use of tugs at the end of her passages. This will afford the cadets an opportunity to get an insight into the various points of seamanship connected with the operations of towage. The mere handling of steel and other kinds of hawsers will by itself give them valuable practice.

General Remarks: Finally I beg leave to touch upon the actual number of people on board. Mr. Laurence Holt's letter speaks of 60 to 80 cadets. I should suggest that the lesser number should be adopted. And even less than 60 if possible. What I have in my mind is the possibility of some accident (which may happen to the best ship afloat) and its effect on the public mind. Regard ought to be paid also to the facility of getting a lesser number of people out of a sinking ship or saving them all in case of a shipwreck.

I have assumed that the period of training would be eighteen months. This in the case of a Conway boy would work out his apprenticeship as follows: One year sea service allowed for Conway training; one year and a half in the sailing ship; the last year and a half as apprentice or cadet in a steamship.

In case of boys joining straight from a school on

shore I suppose they would be kept for two and a half years on board the sailing vessel and finish their time in steam.

I don't touch on the point of navigational studies, for which no doubt a provision will be made. I will only remark that the greatest care and accuracy should be required from the cadets acting as assistant officers of the watch (and generally from all senior boys) in keeping the ship's dead reckoning. This is a point of seamanship rather than navigation.

The ship, whether at anchor or alongside the quay, ought to offer that aspect of finished smartness alow and aloft that a training ship should have. It must be remembered that wherever she goes she will be representing the entire maritime community of the Port of Liverpool, employers and employed, shipowners and seamen.

The cadets going ashore on leave should always wear the ship's uniform, unless specifically invited to play games. The ship will no doubt have a football team and a cricket eleven.

A harbour watch (as distinguished from anchor watch), composed of one senior and two junior cadets, should be kept. And, generally, a proper amount of formality should be observed in the ship's routine both at sea and in port. It is conducive to self-respect in all ranks.

THE LOSS OF THE *DALGONAR*

To the Editor of the London *Mercury*

SIR,

Since you have invited comments from nautical readers on a certain obscure passage in the "True Story" printed in your September number, I will refer here to the point raised by Mr. L. C. Gane and to some other mistakes of minor importance. Not that I think they matter in the least for your readers, who, in any case, would have perceived the great quality of the narrative.

The passage queried by Mr. L. C. Gane, quite justifiably, runs as follows:

"At noon wore ship . . . 7 P. M. wind and sea increasing, took in the *mizzen fore upper topsail.* 11 P. M. wind and sea still increasing, took in the *mizzen and main upper topsails.*"

The italicized words have, nautically speaking, no sense; the first four absolutely, the second five in relation to the first statement; since it is obvious that the mizzen upper topsail could not have been taken in twice.

These are obviously slips of the pen or errors of transcription. The first statement evidently was meant for: "Took in the mizzen and fore upper topsails," the word missing in your text being the "and" after the word "mizzen." The ship then was carrying her fore-sail, lower fore-topsail, lower and upper main-topsail and lower mizzen-topsail. At 11 P. M., the gale still increasing, the sails taken in were the "mizzen *lower*

and main upper topsails," the word missing in the phrase as it stands in the text being the word "lower" after the word "mizzen." Thus, at 11 P. M. the ship was reduced down to her foresail and the fore and main lower topsails, which was a possible and seamanlike canvas for her to carry in the then state of the weather. I cannot, however, defend myself from the impression conveyed by the narrative and also from what happened afterwards, that the foresail was carried on her too long. That large piece of canvas must have had the effect (at least at times) of forcing the ship one and a half or perhaps two knots through the water—for no object that I can see. And *there* was the danger. But it is easy to be wise after the event!

The paragraph queried by Mr. Gane contains also a printing error: the plural "s" should come out of the word "foresails." A ship has got only one foresail.

As to other minor corrections, the words "*main draft*" in the opening paragraph of the story should be "*mean draft,*" as is obvious from the inspection of the figures. The draught of water is a formal logbook entry in any ship about to proceed to sea. Another misprint (on page 483) consists in a superfluous letter. The line runs: "and *web* squared-in the main and cross-jack yards, etc., etc." The "b" got in there by mistake. It should, of course, run: "and *we* squared-in the main, etc.," in what is a correct description of wearing ship, which was the last manœuvre attempted before the *Dalgonar* became unmanageable.

On the next page the meaningless word printed as "nil" should, of course, be "rail."

I agree with all my heart with the editorial note heading the story. There can be nothing finer or more simple. The crew of the *Dalgonar* behaved as well as I have ever seen the crew of a British merchant ship

behave in a critical situation, and they deserve fully the encomiums and blessings Mr. Mull, the Chief Officer, gives to them in his report written on board the *Loire*. A tribute of admiration is due, too, to the captain of the French ship for his humane determination to save those men, and for the display of seamanlike resolution and skill in maintaining his ship in position for so long in such desperate weather. Nobody but a seaman can appreciate the risks and the difficulty of the task, and the severe strain put on the endurance of the crew and officers of the *Loire* in sheer physical exertions, in unremitting vigilance and plucky seamanship, which enabled them to remain by and finally to take off the crew of the *Dalgonar*.

Yours, etc.,
JOSEPH CONRAD.

TRAVEL

A Preface to Richard Curle's "Into the East"

There is no fate so uncertain as the fate of books of travel. They are the most assailable of all men's literary productions. The man who writes a travel book delivers himself more than any other into the hands of his enemies. The popularizing scientific writer's position is much more secure. His very subject is, properly speaking, marvellous in itself, and for that reason the intelligent multitude swallows it eagerly, or at least receives it with open mouth, and forms its own amazing conclusions. A writer of fiction —well!—he romances all the time, and the truth he has in him being disguised in various garments, from gold mantles to rags, is almost beyond the reach of criticism. All really he has got to attend to is grammar and punctuation. Metaphysics, of course, are simply intoxicating for those who like that way of killing our appointed time in this valley of tears. But as to those whose fancy leads them to investigate more or less profoundly that same valley. . . !

But after all a traveller is very much to be envied. He is to be envied for the instinct that prompts him, for the courage that sustains him. He is to be admired for enduring a spectacle almost intolerably gorgeous and varied, but with only hints, here and there, of dramatic scenes, with, practically, no star actors in it, with the knowledge that the curtain will not fall for months and months to come; and that he must play the

exacting part of a spectator of those human characteristics and activities, in their picturesque, ugly, or savage settings, without, so to speak, the prospect of going home to bed presently. Imagine a lover of drama and of stage effects forced to sleep in his very stall, and every day, opening his eyes upon a never-ceasing performance. The taste for that sort of thing may well be envied as evidence of capacity for mental and physical resistance, not only against the strain of all the "things that seem to be," but against one's own weakness. Perhaps that is the reason why the Arabs, racially great travellers and great lovers of wonders, invented the proverb, "Travelling is victory," which stands as the motto of this book. It expresses, indeed, a romantic conception. But there is a soberness of temperament in the Arab race which has prevented it from rushing exultingly into the writing of travel books. Of course, I am an ignorant person, from circumstances which it would not be to my advantage to disclose, but I can only call to mind one Arab traveller who has written a book; and surely if there had been shoals of them I would have heard of another.

Those people did much of their travelling sword in hand and with the name of the One God on their lips. But theirs were personally conducted parties, as destructive to the peace and the spiritual character of places they visited as any crowd from a tourist agency invading the shades of Vallombrosa. Let us forget the Arabs as well as their successors who are achieving victory every year at the price of so many pounds per head for a certain number of days. They demand neither our admiration nor our pity.

Nowadays many people encompass the globe. That kind of victory became to a certain extent fashionable for some years after the piercing of the Isthmus of

Suez. Multitudes rushed through that short cut with blank minds and, alas, also blank notebooks where the megalomania, from which we all more or less suffer, got recorded in the shape of "Impressions." The inanity of the mass of travel books the Suez Canal is responsible for took the proportions of an enormous and melancholy joke. For it was a mournful sight to see so many people giving themselves away. Their books covered private shelves and the tables of *cabinets de lecture* in a swarm more devastating to the world's freshness of impression than a swarm of locusts in a field of young corn. When that visitation began I was quite a boy and in my innocence I read them all, or, at least, all I could lay my hands on. Women, single or in pairs, fashionable couples, professors of intense gravity, facetious business men—I read all their travel books, including even Baron Hübner's "Voyage Round the World," which, I should think, remains unequalled to this day.

That category of travellers with their parrot-like remarks, their strange attempts at being funny, and their lamentable essays in seriousness has apparently passed away. Or perhaps they only print their books for circulation amongst friends. I suspect, however, they have ceased to write simply because there are too many of them. They do not appear as travellers even to the most naïve minds and perhaps even to their own minds. They are simply an enormous company of people who go round the world for a change and rest, either suffering from overwork (whatever that may mean) or from neurasthenia. And I am sure my best wishes go with them for an easy and radical recovery. Steamship companies love them.

Sporting travellers form a class by themselves. They mostly write for other sportsmen, though I must con-

fess that their books hold for me even now some fascination. They are apt to grow monotonous in the descriptive statistics of slaughter and as to the shortcomings of their "boys." Also in their admiration for their trackers, who seem all to have been made from the same pattern. I have noticed them adopting of late years a half-apologetic tone about their exploits; whereas the men of twenty-five years ago, with their much less perfect weapons and their big records, were frankly exulting. Frankness is a virtue I like. I would respect the modern attitude more if I were sure of its absolute genuineness. Moderation in game killing is enforced now by many regulations; but on considering how easy it is not to shoot an antelope one becomes slightly doubtful of the perfect candour of men who travel thousands of miles in dreary steamboats and uncomfortable primitive trains for sport. On the other hand, I admit that a sportsman who would consistently miss every antelope would be an extremely uninteresting person. The world of explorers and discoverers, the heroes of my boyhood, has vanished almost to nothing in the nineteenth century. Some of them wrote the classics of travel, but no passage of years can dim my admiration for their selfless spirit and manly faithfulness to their task pursued in solitude or with a few devoted henchmen, persevered in through numberless days with death only a pace behind, but with a calm mind and a steady heart.

What about mere wanderers?—those individuals that one meets in various fairly well-known localities, but who come upon one round unexpected corners, often shabby and depressed, sometimes haggard and jaunty; with tales in their mouths of the flattest description or of a comic quality bordering on tears; with, now and then, a story that would frighten you to death if

you were one of those men who don't know how to smile in time. I would class them as an outcast tribe if it did not sound so rude. And I would not be rude for anything to people capable of starting on their travels with their hands, and very little else besides, in their pockets. I have known amongst them men of ruffianly mental complexion, cultivating a truculent manner and a cold steady stare, who, if it were possible to bluff one's own destiny, might have been sitting in high places. And I ask myself, in my half-reluctant partiality for the class, whether some of them have not achieved it. But success disguises them at once and contemporary history gives them other names.

In my review of the categories of men who move about the earth I come now to the real travellers who wrote books, the protagonists of the modern travellers, in the same way, I may say, in which Hannon may be looked upon as a protagonist of the discoverers and the circumnavigators of the globe. Only the *Periplus* was probably a dreary official report. At any rate it has not come down to us. The outstanding figure amongst those men who dedicated their books of travel to popes and emperors is Marco Polo, with his meticulous descriptive gift, his cautious credulity, his eye for splendour and his historian's rather than a traveller's temperament. He gave his readers what the readers of that day wanted, historical facts in a foreign and gorgeous atmosphere. But the time for such books of travel is past on this earth girt about with cables, with an atmosphere made restless by the waves of ether, lighted by that sun of the twentieth century under which there is nothing new left now, and but very little of what may still be called obscure.

The day of many-volumed "Journeys, through or to," of "Relations of this or that" (and much charm and

ability some of them had), the days of heroic travel are gone; unless, of course, in the newspaper sense, in which heroism like everything else in the world becomes as common if not as nourishing as our daily bread. There would be always a lady or a gentleman ready to discover with considerable fuss a bit of territory of, say, ten square miles, resembling exactly the surrounding and already explored lands; or interview some new ruler, like a reflection in a dim and tarnished mirror of some real chieftain in the books of a hundred years ago; or marvel at a disagreeable fish of ferocious habits which had been described already in some old-time, simply worded, unsensational "Relation." But even this is a game which is losing its interest, and in a very little time will have come to an end. Presently there will be no backyard left in the heart of Central Africa that has not been peeped into by some person more or less commissioned for the purpose. The Nigeria of Barth, of Denham, of Clapperton, of Mungo Park, of other infinitely curious and profoundly inspired men, will be bristling with police posts, colleges, tramway poles, and all those improving things triumphantly recorded, and always with the romantic addition that, within twenty miles, the hills, or the forests, or the holes in the sand, or the depths of the jungle (that blessed word) are swarming with cannibal tribes miraculously restrained by one white man with two black soldiers and his native cook for all company. And the great cloud of fatuous daily photographs and even more fatuous descriptive chatter, under whose shadow no traveller could live, will brood over those seldom-visited places of the world that, despoiled of their old black soul of mystery, have not yet acquired its substitute, which will be marvellously piebald when it comes.

This moment of ill-humour with "things as they are becoming" is of course perfectly unreasonable and even perverse, which is worse. It would not deserve to be tolerated except for its inherent piety. As a matter of fact I have been thinking for a moment of the dead, of the great and good travellers loved in my boyhood, as I laid aside the MS. of this modern traveller who by publishing it has delivered himself to his enemies. He is very modern, for he is fashioned by the conditions of an explored earth in which the latitudes and longitudes having been recorded once for all have become things of no importance, in the sense that they can no longer appeal to the spirit of adventure, inflame no imagination, lead no one up to the very gates of mortal danger.

These basic facts of geography having been ascertained by the observations of heavenly bodies, the glance of the modern traveller contemplating the much-surveyed earth beholds in fact a world in a state of transition; very different in this from the writers of travel books of Marco Polo's time, who in their conscientious narratives seem to progress amongst immutable wonders, to feed their curiosity on a consistency of the splendid and the bizarre, presented to their eyes to stare at, to their minds to moralize upon.

And those things, which stand as if imperishable in the pages of old books of travel, are all blown away, have vanished as utterly as the smoke of the travellers' camp fires in the icy night air of the Gobi Desert, as the smell of incense burned in the temples of strange gods, as the voices of Asiatic statesmen speculating with the cruel wisdom of past ages on matters of peace and war.

Nothing obviously strange remains for our eyes now. The Khan of Tartary's court ceremonies were certainly marvellous in quite a different sense from the procedure

followed at Kuala Kangsar two years ago, when the Sultan of Perak was invested with the K. C. M. G. by the Governor of the Straits Settlements. This modern traveller describes it all in less words than Marco Polo would have used paragraphs on such a striking occasion. It was curious for him to watch under the formal routine of official compliments the Malay princes play up to British etiquette, while grafting it on their own ideas of politeness, and wearing, he thought, a slightly ironical smile on their dark faces. And to think that only fifty years ago, after a certain amount of jungle and stockade fighting, the Sultan of Perak, or perhaps his brother ruler next door in Selangor, having listened attentively to a lecture from a British Admiral on the heinousness of a certain notable case of piracy, turned round quickly to his attending chiefs and to the silent throng of his Malay subjects, exclaiming, "Hear now, my people! Don't let us have any more of this little game." Those words ought to have been engraved in letters of gold on a marble monument at the mouth of the Jugra River; for from the moment they were pronounced dates the era of security for the poor folks of the coast, for the fishermen and traders in the Straits of Malacca. The downfall of local piracy in fact. The world in transition!

Our very curiosities have changed, growing more subtle amongst the vanishing mysteries of the earth. Very appropriately this modern traveller reclining on the verandah of the State Rest-house, after having watched the ceremonies of installation in the blaring of trumpets and the gorgeous bright colours of the throng, recalls the strong impression of, one might say, indifferent and rather contemptuous good-will between brown and white, and gives himself up to the vain (as he himself observes) occupation of speculating on the

future of countries. But he does it not in the spirit of a statesman looking for political truth, but in the doubting mood of a traveller of our day who on the very threshold of the East has questioned himself as to the ultimate truth of travel; whether perchance it was no more than the mastery of first impressions; and whether the sanity of our outlook on the world consists in secret revolt against its facts but in the final acceptance of the whole, or in the conformity with all the multiple forms and the mental rejection of life's inscrutable purpose? It is this mood which makes him so responsive to the inner promptings suggested by travel, which informs the felicitous rendering of his visual impressions. This it is that forces him, while looking out into the night from the deck of an Irrawaddy flotilla steamer, to admit to himself man's secret antagonism to the wilderness; or during his few hours' stay in Bhamo, a town on the very frontier of the Chinese enigma, where caravans incessantly come and go through mysterious valleys and where people live on rumours from day to day, to absorb its spirit of secrecy and waiting and hear suddenly around him "the whisper of innumerable hills passing on one to another the restless murmur of men's hearts." Very modern in impressions, in appreciations, in curiosities, and in his very love of the mother earth, of whose children he has written subtly and tenderly in some three volumes of characteristic tales; a traveller of our day, condemned to make his discoveries on beaten tracks, he looks on, sensitive, meditative, with delicate perceptions and a gift for expression, alive to the saving grace of human and historical associations; and while pursuing amongst the men busy with ascertained facts the riddles presented by a world in transition, he seems to have captured for us the spirit of modern travel itself.

STEPHEN CRANE

A Preface to Thomas Beer's "Stephen Crane"

On a rainy day of March of the year 1923, listening to the author of this biography telling me of his earnest labours for the memory of a man who was certainly unique in his generation, I exclaimed to myself with wonder: "And so it has come to pass after all—this thing which I did not expect to see!" In truth I had never expected the biography of Stephen Crane to appear in my lifetime. My immense pleasure was affected by the devastating touch of time which like a muddy flood covers under a mass of daily trivialities things of value: moments of affectionate communion with kindred spirits, words spoken with the careless freedom of perfect confidence, the deepest emotions of joy and sorrow—together with such things of merely historical importance as the recollection of dates, for instance. After hearing from Mr. Beer of his difficulties in fixing certain dates in the history of Stephen Crane's life, I discovered that I was unable to remember with any kind of precision the initial date of our friendship. Indeed, life is but a dream—especially for those of us who have never kept a diary or possessed a notebook in our lives.

In this extremity I had recourse to another friend of Stephen Crane, who had appreciated him intuitively almost as soon as I did myself and who is a woman of excellent memory. My wife's recollection is that Crane and I met in London in October, 1897, and that he came

to see us for the first time in our Essex home in the following November.

I have mentioned in a short paper written two years ago that it was Mr. S. S. Pawling, partner in the publishing firm of Mr. Heinemann, who brought us together. It was done at Stephen Crane's own desire.

I was told by Mr. Pawling that when asked whom he wanted to meet Crane mentioned two names, of which one was of a notable journalist (who had written some novels) whom he knew in America, I believe, and the other was mine. At that time the only facts we knew about each other were that we both had the same publisher in England. The only other fact I knew about Stephen Crane was that he was quite a young man. I had, of course, read his "Red Badge of Courage," of which people were writing and talking at that time. I certainly did not know that he had the slightest notion of my existence, or that he had seen a single line (there were not many of them then) of my writing. I can safely say that I earned this precious friendship by something like ten months of strenuous work with my pen. It took me just that time to write "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*," working at what I always considered a very high pressure. It was on the ground of the authorship of that book that Crane wanted to meet me. Nothing could have been more flattering than to discover that the author of "The Red Badge of Courage" appreciated my effort to present a group of men held together by a common loyalty and a common perplexity in a struggle not with human enemies, but with the hostile conditions testing their faithfulness to the conditions of their own calling.

Apart from the imaginative analysis of his own temperament tried by the emotions of a battlefield,

Stephen Crane dealt in his book with the psychology of the mass—the army; while I—in mine—had been dealing with the same subject on a much smaller scale and in more specialized conditions—the crew of a merchant ship, brought to the test of what I may venture to call the moral problem of conduct. This may be thought a very remote connection between these two works and the idea may seem too far-fetched to be mentioned here; but that was my undoubted feeling at the time. It is a fact that I considered Crane, by virtue of his creative experience with "The Red Badge of Courage," as eminently fit to pronounce a judgment on my first consciously planned attempt to render the truth of a phase of life in the terms of my own temperament with all the sincerity of which I was capable.

I had, of course, my own opinion as to what I had done; but I doubted whether anything of my ambitiously comprehensive aim would be understood. I was wrong there; but my doubt was excusable, since I myself would have been hard put to it if requested to give my complex intentions the form of a concise and definite statement. In that period of misgivings which so often follows an accomplished task I would often ask myself, who in the world could be interested in such a thing? It was after reading "The Red Badge," which came into my hands directly after its publication in England, that I said to myself: "Here's a man who may understand—if he ever sees the book; though of course that would not mean that he would like it." I do not mean to say that I looked towards the author of "The Red Badge" as the only man in the world. It would have been stupid and ungrateful. I had the moral support of one or two intimate friends and the solid fact of Mr. W. E. Henley's acceptance of my tale for

serial publication in the *New Review* to give me confidence, while I awaited the larger verdict.

It seems to me that in trying to recall my memories of Stephen Crane I have been talking so far only about myself; but that is unavoidable, since this Introduction, which I am privileged to write, can only trace what is left on earth of our personal intercourse, which was even more short and fleeting than it may appear from the record of dates. October, 1897—May, 1900. And out of that beggarly tale of months must be deducted the time of his absence from England during the Spanish-American War, and of his visit to the United States shortly before the beginning of his last illness. Even when he was in England our intercourse was not so close and frequent as the warmth of our friendship would have wished it to be. We both lived in the country and, though not very far from each other, in different counties. I had my work to do, always in conditions which made it a matter of urgency. He had his own tasks and his own visions to attend to. I do not think that he had more friendships to claim him than I, but he certainly had more acquaintances and more calls on his time.

This was only natural. It must be remembered that as an author he was my senior, as I used to remind him now and then with affected humility which always provoked his smiles. He had a quiet smile that charmed and frightened one. It made you pause by something revelatory it cast over his whole physiognomy, not like a ray but like a shadow. I often asked myself what it could be, that quality that checked one's care-free mood, and now I think I have had my answer. It was the smile of a man who knows that his time will not be long on this earth.

I would not for a moment wish to convey the im-

pression of melancholy in connection with my memories of Stephen Crane. I saw his smile first over the tablecloth in a restaurant. We shook hands with intense gravity and a direct stare at each other, after the manner of two children told to make friends. It was under the encouraging gaze of Sydney Pawling, who, a much bigger man than either of us and possessed of a deep voice, looked like a grown-up person entertaining two strange small boys—protecting and slightly anxious as to the experiment. He knew very little of either of us. I was a new author and Crane was a new arrival. It was the meeting of "The Red Badge" and "The Nigger" in the presence of their publisher; but as far as our personalities went we were three strangers breaking bread together for the first time. Yet it was as pleasantly easy a meal as any I can remember. Crane talked in his characteristic deliberate manner about Greece at war. I had already sensed the man's intense earnestness underlying his quiet surface. Every time he raised his eyes, that secret quality (for his voice was careless) of his soul was betrayed in a clear flash. Most of the true Stephen Crane was in his eyes, most of his strength at any rate, though it was apparent also in his other features, as, for instance, in the structure of his forehead, the deep solid arches under the fair eyebrows.

Some people saw traces of weakness in the lower part of his face. What I could see there was a hint of the delicacy of sentiment, of the inborn fineness of nature which this man, whose life had been anything but a stroll through a rose-garden, had managed to preserve like a sacred heritage. I say heritage, not acquisition, for it was not and could not have been acquired. One could depend on it on all occasions; whereas the cultivated kind is apt to show ugly gaps under very slight

provocation. The coarseness of the professedly delicate must be very amusing to the misanthrope. But Crane was no enemy of his kind. That sort of thing did not amuse him. As to his own temper, it was proof against anger and scorn, as I can testify, having seen him both angry and scornful, always quietly, on fitting occasions. Contempt and indignation never broke the surface of his moderation, simply because he had no surface. He was all through of the same material, incapable of affectation of any kind, of any pitiful failure of generosity for the sake of personal advantage, or even from sheer exasperation which must find its relief.

Many people imagined him a fiery individuality. Certainly he was not cold-blooded. But his was an equable glow, morally and temperamentally. I would have said the same of his creative power (I have seen him sit down before a blank sheet of paper, dip his pen, write the first line at once and go on without haste and without pause for a couple of hours), had he not confided to me that his mentality did flag at times. I do not think it was anything more than every writer is familiar with at times. Another man would have talked of his "failing inspiration." It is very characteristic of Crane that I have never heard him use that word when talking about his work.

His phraseology was generally of a very modest cast. That unique and exquisite faculty, which Edward Garnett, another of his friends, found in his writing—"of disclosing an individual scene by an odd simile"—was not apparent in his conversation. It was interesting, of course, but its charm consisted mainly in the freshness of his impressions, set off by an acute simplicity of view and expressed with an amusing deliberation. Superabundance of words was not his

failing when communing with those he liked and felt he could trust. With the other kind of "friends" he followed the method of a sort of suspended silence. On a certain occasion (it was at Brede Place), after two amazingly conceited idiots had gone away, I said to him, "Stevie, you brood like a distant thundercloud." He had retired early to the other end of the room, and from there had sent out, now and then, a few words, more like the heavy drops of rain that precede the storm than growls of thunder. Poor Crane, if he could look black enough at times, never thundered; though I have no doubt he could have been dangerous if he had liked. There always seemed to be something (not timidity) which restrained him, not from within but, I could not help fancying, from outside, with an effect as of a whispered *memento mori* in the ear of a reveller not lost to the sense of grace.

That of course was a later impression. It must be stated clearly that I know very little of Stephen Crane's life. We did not feel the need to tell each other formally the story of our lives. That did not prevent us from being very intimate and also very open with each other from the first. Our affection would have been "everlasting," as he himself qualified it, had not the jealous death intervened with her cruel capriciousness by striking down the younger man. Our intimacy was really too close to admit of indiscretions; not that he did not speak amusingly of his experiences and of his hardships, and warmly of the men that helped him in his early days, like Mr. Hamlin Garland for instance, or men kindly encouraging to him, like Mr. Howells. Many other names he used to utter lovingly have been forgotten by me after so many years.

It is a fact that I heard more of his adventures than of his trials, privations, and difficulties. I know he had

many. He was the least recriminatory of men (though one of the most sensitive, I should say), but, in any case, nothing I could have learned would have shaken the independent judgment I had formed for myself of his trustworthiness as a man and a friend. Though the word is discredited now and may sound pretentious, I will say that there was in Crane a strain of chivalry which made him safe to trust with one's life. To be recognizably a man of honour carries no immunity against human weaknesses, but comports more rigid limitations in personal relations than the status of an "honourable man," however recognizable that too may be. Some men are "honourable" by courtesy, others by the office they hold, or simply by belonging to some popular assembly, the election to which is not generally secured by a dignified accuracy of statement and a scrupulous regard for the feelings of others. Many remain honourable (because of their great circumspection in the conduct of their affairs) without holding within themselves any of these restraints which are inherent in the character of a man of honour, however weak or luckless he may be.

I do not know everything about the strength of Crane's circumspection, but I am not afraid of what the biography which follows may disclose to us; though I am convinced that it will be free from hypocritical reservations. I think I have understood Stephen Crane, and from my too short acquaintance with his biographer I am confident he will receive the most humane and sympathetic treatment. What I discovered very early in our acquaintance was that Crane had not the face of a lucky man. That certitude came to me at our first meeting while I sat opposite him listening to his simple tales of Greece, while S. S. Pawling presided at the initiatory feast—friendly and

debonair, looking solidly anchored in the stream of life, and very reassuring, like a big, prosperous ship to the sides of which we two in our tossing little barks could hook on for safety. He was interested in the tales too; and the best proof of it is that when he looked at his watch and jumped up, saying, "I must leave you two now," it was very near four o'clock. Nearly a whole afternoon wasted, for an English business man.

No such consideration of waste or duty agitated Crane and myself. The sympathy that, even in regard of the very few years allotted to our friendship, may be said to have sprung up instantaneously between us, was the most undemonstrative case of that sort in the last century. We not only did not tell each other of it (which would have been missish), but even without entering formally into a previous agreement to remain together, we went out and began to walk side by side in the manner of two tramps without home, occupation, or care for the next night's shelter. We certainly paid no heed to direction. The first thing I noticed were the Green Park railings, when to my remark that he had seen no war before he went to Greece, Crane made answer: "No. But 'The Red Badge' is all right." I assured him that I never had doubted it; and, since the title of the work had been pronounced for the first time, feeling I must do something to show I had read it, I said shyly: "I like your General." He knew at once what I was alluding to, but said not a word. Nothing could have been more tramp-like than our silent pacing, elbow to elbow, till, after we had left Hyde Park Corner behind us, Crane uttered with his quiet earnestness the words: "I like your young man—I can just see him." Nothing could have been more characteristic of the depth of our three-hour-old intimacy than that each of us should have selected for

praise the merest by-the-way vignette of a minor character.

This was positively the only allusion we made that afternoon to our immortal works. Indeed we talked very little of them at any time, and then always selecting some minor point for particular mention; which, after all, is not a bad way of showing an affectionate appreciation of a piece of work done by a friend. A stranger would have expected more, but, in a manner of speaking, Crane and I had never been strangers. We took each other's work for granted from the very first, I mean from the moment we had exchanged those laudatory remarks alongside the Green Park railings. Henceforth mutual recognition kept to that standard. It consisted often of an approving grunt, sometimes of the mention of some picked-out paragraph, or of a line or only of a few words that had caught our fancy and would, for a time, be applied more or less aptly to the turns of our careless, or even serious, talks.

Thus, for instance, there was a time when I persecuted poor Crane with the words "barbarously abrupt." They occur in that marvellous story, "The Open Boat", and are applied by him to the waves of the sea (as seen by men tossing in a small dinghy) with an inspired audacity of epithet which was one of Crane's gifts that gave me most delight. How amazingly apt these words are where they stand, anybody can see by looking at that story, which is altogether a big thing, and has remained an object of my confirmed admiration. I was always telling Crane that this or that was "barbarously abrupt," or begging him not to be so "barbarously abrupt" himself, with a keen enjoyment of the incongruity; for no human being could be less abrupt than Crane. As to his humanity (in contradistinction to barbarity), it was a shining thing without a flaw. It is

possible that he may have grown at length weary of my little joke, but he invariably received it with a smile, thus proving his consistent humanity towards his kind. But, after all, he too liked that story of his, of four men in a very small boat, which by the deep and simple humanity of presentation seems somehow to illustrate the essentials of life itself, like a symbolic tale. It opens with a phrase that anybody could have uttered, but which, in relation to what is to follow, acquires the poignancy of a meaning almost universal. Once, much later in our acquaintance, I made use of it to him. He came on a flying visit to Pent Farm where we were living then. I noticed that he looked harassed. I, too, was feeling for the moment as if things were getting too much for me. He lay on the couch and I sat on a chair opposite. After a longish silence, in which we both could have felt how uncertain was the issue of life envisaged as a deadly adventure in which we were both engaged like two men trying to keep afloat in a small boat, I said suddenly across the width of the mantelpiece:

"None of them knew the colour of the sky."

He raised himself sharply. The words had struck him as familiar, though I believe he failed to place them at first. "Don't you know that quotation?" I asked. (These words form the opening sentence of his tale.) The startled expression passed off his face. "Oh, yes," he said quietly, and lay down again. Truth to say, it was a time when neither he nor I had the leisure to look up idly at the sky. The waves just then were too "barbarously abrupt."

I do not mean to say that it was always so. Now and then we were permitted to snatch a glance at the colour of the sky. But it is a fact that in the history of our essentially undemonstrative friendship (which is

nearly as difficult to recapture as a dream) that first long afternoon is the most care-free instant, and the only one that had a character of enchantment about it. It was spread out over a large portion of central London. After the Green Park the next thing I remember are the Kensington Gardens, where under the lofty and historical trees I was vouchsafed a glimpse of the low mesquite bush overspreading the plum-coloured infinities of the great Texas plains. Then after a long tramp amongst an orderly multitude of grimy brick houses—from which the only things I carried off were the impressions of the coloured rocks of Mexico (or was it Arizona?), and my first knowledge of a locality called the Painted Desert—there came suddenly Oxford Street. I don't know whether the inhabitants of London were keeping indoors or had gone into the country that afternoon, but I don't remember seeing any people in the streets except for a figure, now and then, unreal, flitting by, obviously negligible. The wheeled traffic, too, was stopped; yet, it seems, not entirely, because I remember Crane seizing my arm and jerking me back on the pavement with the calm remark: "You will get run over." I love to think that the dear fellow had saved my life and that it seemed to amuse him. As to London's enormous volume of business, all I know is that one A. B. C. shop had remained open. We went through the depressing ceremony of having tea there; but our interest in each other mitigated its inherent horrors and gave me a good idea of Crane's stoicism. At least I suppose we had tea, otherwise they would not have let us sit there so long. To be left alone was all we wanted. Neither of us had then a club to entertain the other in. It will give a good notion of our indomitable optimism (on that afternoon) when I say that it was there, in those

dismal surroundings, we reached the conclusion that though the world had grown old and weary, yet the scheme of creation remained as obscure as ever, and (from our own particular point of view) there was still much that was interesting to expect from gods and men.

As if intoxicated by this draught of hope we rolled out of that A. B. C. shop, but I kept my head sufficiently to guess what was coming and to send a warning telegram to my wife in our Essex home. Crane then was, I believe, staying temporarily in London. But he seemed to have no care in the world; and so we resumed our tramping—east and north and south again, steering through uncharted mazes the streets, forgetting to think of dinner but taking a rest here and there, till we found ourselves, standing in the middle of Piccadilly Circus, blinking at the lights like two authentic night-birds. By that time we had been (in Tottenham Court Road) joined by Balzac. How he came in I have no idea. Crane was not given to literary curiosities of that kind. Somebody he knew, or something he had read, must have attracted lately his attention to Balzac. And now suddenly at ten o'clock in the evening he demanded insistently to be told in particular detail all about the "Comédie Humaine," its contents, its scope, its plan, and its general significance, together with a critical description of Balzac's style. I told him hastily that it was just black on white; and for the rest, I said, he would have to wait till we got across to Monico's and had eaten some supper. I hoped he would forget Balzac and his "Comédie." But not a bit of it; and I had no option but to hold forth over the remnants of a meal, in the rush of hundreds of waiters and the clatter of tons of crockery, caring not what I said (for what could Stephen want with Balzac?), in the comfortable

assurance that the Monstrous Shade, even if led by some strange caprice to haunt the long room of Monico's, did not know enough English to understand a single word I said. I wonder what Crane made of it all. He did not look bored, and it was eleven o'clock before we parted at the foot of that monumentally heavy abode of frivolity, the Pavilion, with just a hand-shake and a good-night—no more—without making any arrangements for meeting again, as though we had lived in the same town from childhood and were sure to run across each other next day.

It struck me directly I left him that we had not even exchanged addresses; but I was not uneasy. Sure enough, before the month was out there arrived a post card (from Ravensbrook) asking whether he might come to see us. He came, was received as an old friend, and before the end of the day conquered my wife's sympathy, as undemonstrative and sincere as his own quiet friendliness. The friendship that sprang up between them was confirmed by the interest Crane displayed in our first child, a boy who came on the scene not quite two months afterwards. How strong was that interest on the part of Stephen Crane and his wife in the boy is evidenced by the fact that at the age of six weeks he was invited to come for a long visit to Ravensbrook. He was in fact impatiently expected there. He arrived in state, bringing with him not only his parents but also a young aunt, and was welcomed like a prince. This visit, during which I suffered from a sense of temporary extinction, is commemorated by a group photograph taken by an artist summoned with his engine (regardless of expense) to Ravensbrook. Though the likenesses are not bad, it is a very awful thing. Nobody looks like him or herself in it. The best yet are the Crane dogs, a very important part of the establishment and

quite conscious of it, belonging apparently to some order of outlandish poodles, amazingly sedate, and yet the most restless animals I have ever met. They pervaded, populated, and filled the whole house. Whichever way one looked at any time, down the passage, up the stairs, into the drawing room, there was always a dog in sight. Had I been asked on the first day how many there were, I would have guessed about thirty. As a matter of fact there were only three, but I think they never sat down, except in Crane's study, where they had their *entrée* at all hours.

A scratching would be heard at the door, Crane would drop his pen with alacrity to throw it open—and the dogs would enter sedately in single file, taking a lot of time about it, too. Then the room would resound for a while with grunts, sniffs, yawns, heavy flops, followed by as much perhaps as three whole minutes of silence. Then the dogs would get up, one after another, never all together, and direct their footsteps to the door in an impressive and ominous manner. The first arrival waited considerately for the others before trying to attract attention by means of scratching on the bottom panel. Then, never before, Crane would raise his head, go meekly to the door—and the procession would file out at the slowest possible pace. The recurrent sedateness of the proceedings, the utter unconsciousness of the dogs, dear Stephen's absurd gravity while playing his part in those ceremonies, without ever a muscle of his face moving, were irresistibly, exasperatingly funny. I tried to preserve my gravity (or at least to keep calm), with fair success. Only one afternoon on the fifth or sixth repetition I could not help bursting into a loud interminable laugh, and then the dear fellow asked me in all innocence what was the matter. I managed to conceal my nervous irritation from him, and he never

learned the secret of that laugh in which there was a beginning of hysteria.

If the definition that man is a laughing animal be true, then Crane was neither one nor the other; indeed he was but a hurried visitor on this earth on which he had so little reason to be joyous. I might say that I never heard him laugh, except in connection with the baby. He loved children; but his friendship with our child was of the kind that put our mutual sentiment, by comparison, somewhere within the arctic region. The two could not be compared; at least I have never detected Crane stretched full length and sustained on his elbows on a grass plot, in order to gaze at me; on the other hand, this was his usual attitude of communion with the small child—with him who was called *the Boy* and whose destiny it was to see more war before he came of age than the author of "The Red Badge" had time to see in all the allotted days of his life. In the gravity of its disposition the baby came quite up to Crane; yet those two would sometimes find something to laugh at in each other. Then there would be silence, and glancing out of the low window of my room I would see them, very still, staring at each other with a solemn understanding that needed no words, or perhaps was beyond words altogether. I could not object on any ground to their profound intimacy, but I do not see why Crane should have developed such an unreasonable suspicion as to my paternal efficiency. He seemed to be everlastingly taking the boy's part. I could not see that the baby was being oppressed, hectored over, or in any way deprived of its rights, or ever wounded in its feelings by me; but Crane seemed always to nurse some vague unexpressed grievance as to my conduct. I was inconsiderate. For instance—why could I not get a dog for the boy? One day he made quite a scene about

it. He seemed to imply I should drop everything and go look for a dog. I sat under the storm and said nothing. At last he cried, "Hang it all, a boy ought to have a dog." It was an appeal to first principles, but for an answer I pointed at the window and said: "Behold the boy." . . . He was sitting on a rug spread on the grass, with his little red stocking-cap very much over one eye (a fact of which he seemed unaware), and propped round with many pillows on account of his propensity to roll over on his side helplessly. My answer was irresistible. This is one of the few occasions on which I heard Stephen Crane laugh outright. He dropped his preaching on the dog theme and went out to the boy while I went on with my work. But he was strangely incorrigible. When he came back after an hour or so, his first words were, "Joseph, I will teach your boy to ride." I closed with the offer at once—but it was not to be. He was not given the time.

The happiest mental picture my wife and I preserve of Crane is on the occasion of our first visit to Brede Place when he rode to meet us at the Park gate. He looked at his best on horseback. On that day he must have been feeling well. As usual, he was happy in the saddle. As he went on trotting by the side of the open trap I said to him: "If you give the boy your seat I will be perfectly satisfied." I knew this would please him; and indeed his face remained wreathed in smiles all the way to the front door. He looked about him at that bit of the world, down the green slopes and up the brown fields, with an appreciative serenity and the confident bearing of a man who is feeling very sure of the present and of the future. All because he was looking at life from the saddle, with a good morning's work behind him. Nothing more is needed to give a man a blessed moment of illusion. The more I think

of that morning, the more I believe it was just that; that it had really been given me to see Crane perfectly happy for a couple of hours; and that it was under this spell that directly we arrived he led me impatiently to the room in which he worked when at Brede. After we got there he said to me, "Joseph, I will give you something." I had no idea what it would be, till I saw him sit down to write an inscription in a very slim volume. He presented it to me with averted head. It was "The Black Riders." He had never spoken to me of his verse before. It was while holding the book in my hand that I learned that they were written years before in America. I expressed my appreciation of them that afternoon in the usual half-a-dozen, or dozen, words which we allowed ourselves when completely pleased with each other's work. When the pleasure was not so complete the words would be many. And that was a great waste of breath and time. I must confess that we were no critics, I mean temperamentally. Crane was even less of a critic than myself. Criticism is very much a matter of a vocabulary, very consciously used; with us it was the intonation that mattered. The tone of a grunt could convey an infinity of meaning between us.

The articulate literary conscience at our elbow was Edward Garnett. He, of course, was worth listening to. His analytical appreciation (or appreciative analysis) of Crane's art, in the London *Academy* of 17th December, 1898,[1] goes to the root of the matter with Edward's almost uncanny insight, and a well-balanced sympathy with the blind, pathetic striving of the artist towards a complete realization of his individual gift. How highly Edward Garnett rated Crane's gift is recorded in the conclusions of that admirable and,

[1]Extended and republished in the volume "Friday Nights."

within the limits of its space, masterly article of some two columns, where at the end are set down such affirmative phrases as: "The chief impressionist of the age." . . . "Mr. Crane's talent is unique" . . . and where he hails him as "the creator of fresh rhythms and phrases," while the very last words state confidently that: "Undoubtedly, of the young school it is Mr. Crane who is the genius—the others have their talents."

My part here being not that of critic but of private friend, all I will say is that I agreed warmly at the time with that article, which from the quoted phrases might be supposed a merely enthusiastic pronouncement, but on reading will be found to be based on that calm sagacity which Edward Garnett, for all his fiery zeal in the cause of letters, could always summon for the judgment of matters emotional—as all response to the various forms of art must be in the main. I had occasion to re-read it last year in its expanded form in a collection of literary essays of great, now almost historical, interest in the record of American and English imaginative literature. I found there a passage or two, not bearing precisely on Crane's work but giving a view of his temperament, on which of course his art was based; and of the conditions, moral and material, under which he had to put forth his creative faculties and his power of steady composition. Of those matters, as a man who had the opportunity to look at Crane's life in England, I wish to offer a few remarks before closing my contribution to the memory of my friend.

I do not know that he was ever dunned for money and had to work under a threat of legal proceedings. I don't think he was ever dunned in the sense in which such a phrase is used about a spendthrift unscrupulous in incurring debts. No doubt he was sometimes pressed

for money. He lived by his pen, and the prices he obtained were not great. Personally he was not extravagant; and I will not quarrel with him for not choosing to live in a garret. The tenancy of Brede Place was held by him at a nominal rent. That glorious old place was not restored then, and the greatest part of it was uninhabitable. The Cranes had furnished in a modest way six or seven of the least dilapidated rooms, which even then looked bare and half empty. Certainly there was a horse, and at one time even two, but that luxury was not so very expensive at that time. One man looked after them. Riding was the only exercise open to Crane; and if he did work so hard, surely he was entitled to some relaxation, if only for the preservation of his unique talent.

His greatest extravagance was hospitality, of which I, too, had my share; often in the company, I am sorry to say, of men who after sitting at his board chose to speak of him and of his wife slightingly. Having some rudimentary sense of decency, their behaviour while actually under the Cranes' roof often produced on me a disagreeable impression. Once I ventured to say to him, "You are too good-natured, Stephen." He gave me one of his quiet smiles, that seemed to hint so poignantly at the vanity of all things, and after a period of silence remarked: "I am glad those Indians are gone." He was surrounded by men who, secretly envious, hostile to the real quality of his genius (and a little afraid of it), were also in antagonism with the essential fineness of his nature. But enough of them. *Pulvis et umbra sunt.* I mean even those that may be alive yet. They were ever hardly anything else; one would have forgotten them if it were not for the legend (if one may dignify perfidious and contemptible gossip by that name) they created in order to satisfy that same

obscure instinct of base humanity, which in the past would often bring against any exceptional man the charge of consorting with the devil. It was just as vague, just as senseless, and in its implications just as lying as the mediæval kind. I have heard one of these "friends" hint before several other Philistines that Crane could not write his tales without getting drunk!

Putting aside the gross palpable stupidity of such a statement—which the creature gave out as an instance of the artistic temperament—I am in a position to disclose what may have been the foundation of this piece of gossip. I have seen repeatedly Crane at work. A small jug of still smaller ale would be brought into the study at about ten o'clock; Crane would pour out some of it into a glass and settle himself at the long table at which he used to write in Brede Place. I would take a book and settle myself at the other end of the same table, with my back to him; and for two hours or so not a sound would be heard in that room. At the end of that time Crane would say suddenly: "I won't do any more now, Joseph." He would have covered three of his large sheets with his regular, legible, perfectly controlled handwriting, with no more than a half-a-dozen erasures—mostly single words—in the whole lot. It seemed to me always a perfect miracle in the way of mastery over material and expression. Most of the ale would be still in the glass, and how flat by that time I don't like to think! The most amusing part was to see Crane, as if moved by some obscure sense of duty, drain the last drop of that untempting remnant before we left the room to stroll to and fro in front of the house while waiting for lunch. Such is the origin of some of these gleeful whispers making up the Crane legend of "unrestrained temperament." I have known various sorts of temperaments—some perfidious and some lying—

but "unrestrained temperament" is mere parrot talk. It has no meaning. But it was suggestive. It was founded on Crane's visits to town, during which I more than once met him there. We used to spend afternoons and evenings together, and I did not see any of his supposed revels in progress; nor yet have I ever detected any after effects of them on any occasion. Neither have I ever seen anybody who would own to having been a partner in those excesses—if only to the extent of standing by charitably—which would have been a noble part to play. I daresay all those "excesses" amounted to very little more than the one in which he asked me to join him in the following letter. It is the only note I have kept from the very few which we exchanged. The reader will see why it is one of my most carefully preserved possessions.

Ravensbrook, Oxted,
March 17 (1899).

My dear Conrad:

I am enclosing you a bit of MS. under the supposition that you might like to keep it in remembrance of my warm and endless friendship for you. I am still hoping that you will consent to Stokes' invitation to come to the Savage on Saturday night. Cannot you endure it? Give my affectionate remembrances to Mrs. Conrad and my love to the boy.

Yours always,
Stephen Crane.

P. S. You must accept says Cora—and I—our invitation to come home with me on Sat. night.

I joined him. We had a very amusing time with the Savages. Afterwards Crane refused to go home till the last train. Evidence of what somebody has called

his "unrestrained temperament," no doubt. So we went and sat at Gatti's, I believe—unless it was in a Bodega which existed then in that neighbourhood—and talked. I have a vivid memory of this awful debauch because it was on that evening that Crane told me of a subject for a story—a very exceptional thing for him to do. He called it "The Predecessor." I could not recall now by what capricious turns and odd associations of thought he reached the enthusiastic conclusion that it would make a good play, and that we must do it together. He wanted me to share in a certain success—"a dead sure thing," he said. His was an unrestrainedly generous temperament. But let that pass. I must have been specially predisposed, because I caught the infection at once. There and then we began to build up the masterpiece, interrupting each other eagerly, for, I don't know how it was, the air around us had suddenly grown thick with felicitous suggestions. We carried on this collaboration as far as the railway time-table would let us, and then made a break for the last train. Afterwards we did talk of our collaboration now and then, but no attempt at it was ever made. Crane had other stories to write; I was immersed deeply in "Lord Jim," of which I had to keep up the instalments in *Blackwood's;* difficulties in presenting the subject on the stage rose one after another before our experience. The general subject consisted in a man personating his "predecessor" (who had died) in the hope of winning a girl's heart. The scenes were to include a ranch at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, I remember, and the action, I fear, would have been frankly melodramatic. Crane insisted that one of the situations should present the man and the girl on a boundless plain standing by their dead ponies after a furious ride (a truly Crane touch). I made some

objections. A boundless plain in the light of a sunset could be got into a back-cloth, I admitted; but I doubted whether we could induce the management of any London theatre to deposit two stuffed horses on its stage.

Recalling now those earnestly fantastic discussions, it occurs to me that Crane and I must have been unconsciously penetrated by a prophetic sense of the technique and of the very spirit of film-plays, of which even the name was unknown then to the world. But if gifted with prophetic sense, we must have been strangely ignorant of ourselves, since it must be obvious to any one who has read a page of our writings that a collaboration between us two could never have come to anything in the end—could never even have been begun. The project was merely the expression of our affection for each other. We were fascinated for a moment by the will-of-the-wisp of close artistic communion. It would in no case have led us into a bog. I flatter myself we both had too much regard for each other's gifts not to be clear-eyed about them. We would not have followed the lure very far. At the same time it cannot be denied that there were profound, if not extensive, similitudes in our temperaments which could create for a moment that fascinating illusion. It is not to be regretted, for it had, at any rate, given us some of the most light-hearted moments in the clear but sober atmosphere of our intimacy. From the force of circumstances there could not be much sunshine in it. "None of them saw the colour of the sky!" And alas, it stood already written that it was the younger man who would fail to make a landing through the surf. So I am glad to have that episode to remember, a brotherly serio-comic interlude, played under the shadow of coming events. But I would not have

alluded to it at all if it had not come out in the course of my most interesting talk with the author of this biography, that Crane had thought it worth while to mention it in his correspondence, whether seriously or humorously, I know not. So here it is without the charm which it had for me, but which cannot be reproduced in the mere relation of its outward characteristics: a clear gleam on us two, succeeded by the Spanish-American War into which Crane disappeared like a wilful man walking away into the depths of an ominous twilight.

The cloudy afternoon when we two went rushing all over London together was for him the beginning of the end. The problem was to find £60 that day, before the sun set, before dinner, before the "six-forty" train to Oxted, at once, that instant—lest peace should be declared and the opportunity of seeing a war be missed. I had not £60 to lend him. Sixty shillings was nearer my mark. We tried various offices but had no luck, or rather we had the usual luck of money-hunting enterprises. The man was either gone out to see about a dog, or would take no interest in the Spanish-American War. In one place the man wanted to know what was the hurry? He would have liked to have forty-eight hours to think the matter over. As we came downstairs, Crane's white-faced excitement frightened me. Finally it occurred to me to take him to Messrs. William Blackwood & Sons' London office. There he was received in a most friendly way. Presently I escorted him to Charing Cross, where he took the train for home with the assurance that he would have the means to start "for the war" next day. That is the reason I cannot to this day read his tale, "The Price of the Harness", without a pang. It has done nothing more deadly than pay his debt to Messrs. Blackwood;

yet now and then I feel as though that afternoon I had led him by the hand to his doom. But, indeed, I was only the blind agent of the fate that had him in her grip! Nothing could have held him back. He was ready to swim the ocean.

Thirteen years afterwards I made use, half consciously, of the shadow of the primary idea of "The Predecessor" in one of my short tales which were serialized in the *Metropolitan Magazine*. But in that tale the dead man in the background is not a Predecessor but merely an assistant on a lonely plantation; and instead of the ranch, the mountains, and the plains, there is a cloud-capped island, a bird-haunted reef, and the sea. All this the mere distorted shadow of what we two used to talk about in a fantastic mood; but now and then, as I wrote, I had the feeling that he had the right to come and look over my shoulder. But he never came. I received no suggestions from him, subtly conveyed without words. There will never be any collaboration for us now. But I wonder, were he alive, whether he would be pleased with the tale. I don't know. Perhaps not. Or, perhaps, after picking up the volume with that detached air I remember so well and turning over page after page in silence, he would suddenly read aloud a line or two and then, looking straight into my eyes as was his wont on such occasions, say with all the intense earnestness of affection that was in him: "I—like—that, Joseph."

HIS WAR BOOK

A Preface to Stephen Crane's "The Red Badge of Courage"

One of the most enduring memories of my literary life is the sensation produced by the appearance in 1895 of Crane's "Red Badge of Courage" in a small volume belonging to Mr. Heinemann's Pioneer Series of Modern Fiction—very modern fiction of that time, and upon the whole not devoid of merit. I have an idea the series was meant to give us shocks, and as far as my recollection goes there were, to use a term made familiar to all by another war, no "duds" in that small and lively bombardment. But Crane's work detonated on the mild din of that attack on our literary sensibilities with the impact and force of a twelve-inch shell charged with a very high explosive. Unexpected it fell amongst us; and its fall was followed by a great outcry.

Not of consternation, however. The energy of that projectile hurt nothing and no one (such was its good fortune), and delighted a good many. It delighted soldiers, men of letters, men in the street; it was welcomed by all lovers of personal expression as a genuine revelation, satisfying the curiosity of a world in which war and love have been subjects of song and story ever since the beginning of articulate speech.

Here we had an artist, a man not of experience but a man inspired, a seer with a gift for rendering the significant on the surface of things and with an incomparable insight into primitive emotions, who, in order to give

us the image of war, had looked profoundly into his own breast. We welcomed him. As if the whole vocabulary of praise had been blown up sky-high by this missile from across the Atlantic, a rain of words descended on our heads, words well or ill chosen, chunks of pedantic praise and warm appreciation, clever words, and words of real understanding, platitudes, and felicities of criticism, but all as sincere in their response as the striking piece of work which set so many critical pens scurrying over the paper.

One of the most interesting, if not the most valuable, of printed criticisms was perhaps that of Mr. George Wyndham, soldier, man of the world, and in a sense a man of letters. He went into the whole question of war literature, at any rate during the nineteenth century, evoking comparisons with the *Mémoires* of General Marbot and the famous *Diary of a Cavalry Officer* as records of a personal experience. He rendered justice to the interest of what soldiers themselves could tell us, but confessed that to gratify the curiosity of the potential combatant who lurks in most men as to the picturesque aspects and emotional reactions of a battle we must go to the artist with his Heaven-given faculty of words at the service of his divination as to what the truth of things is and must be. He comes to the conclusion that:

"Mr. Crane has contrived a masterpiece."

"Contrived"—that word of disparaging sound is the last word I would have used in connection with any piece of work by Stephen Crane, who in his art (as indeed in his private life) was the least "contriving" of men. But as to "masterpiece," there is no doubt that "The Red Badge of Courage" is that, if only because of the marvellous accord of the vivid impressionistic description of action on that woodland battlefield,

and the imaged style of the analysis of the emotions in the inward moral struggle going on in the breast of one individual—the Young Soldier of the book, the protagonist of the monodrama presented to us in an effortless succession of graphic and coloured phrases.

Stephen Crane places his Young Soldier in an untried regiment. And this is well contrived—if any contrivance there be in a spontaneous piece of work which seems to spurt and flow like a tapped stream from the depths of the writer's being. In order that the revelation should be complete, the Young Soldier has to be deprived of the moral support which he would have found in a tried body of men matured in achievement to the consciousness of its worth. His regiment had been tried by nothing but days of waiting for the order to move; so many days that it and the Youth within it have come to think of themselves as merely "a part of a vast blue demonstration." The army had been lying camped near a river, idle and fretting, till the moment when Stephen Crane lays hold of it at dawn with masterly simplicity: "The cold passed reluctantly from the earth. . . ." These are the first words of the war book which was to give him his crumb of fame.

The whole of that opening paragraph is wonderful in the homely dignity of the indicated lines of the landscape, and the shivering awakening of the army at the break of the day before the battle. In the next, with a most effective change to racy colloquialism of narrative, the action which motivates, sustains and feeds the inner drama forming the subject of the book, begins with the Tall Soldier going down to the river to wash his shirt. He returns waving his garment above his head. He had heard at fifth-hand from somebody that the army is going to move to-morrow. The only immediate effect of this piece of news is that a Negro teamster, who had

been dancing a jig on a wooden box in a ring of laughing soldiers, finds himself suddenly deserted. He sits down mournfully. For the rest, the Tall Soldier's excitement is met by blank disbelief, profane grumbling, an invincible incredulity. But the regiment is somehow sobered. One feels it, though no symptoms can be noticed. It does not know what a battle is, neither does the Young Soldier. He retires from the babbling throng into what seems a rather comfortable dugout and lies down with his hands over his eyes to think. Thus the drama begins.

He perceives suddenly that he had looked upon wars as historical phenomenons of the past. He had never believed in war in his own country. It had been a sort of play affair. He had been drilled, inspected, marched for months, till he has despaired "of ever seeing a Greek-like struggle. Such were no more. Men were better or more timid. Secular and religious education had effaced the throat-grappling instinct, or else firm finance held in check the passions."

Very modern this touch. We can remember thoughts like these round about the year 1914. That Young Soldier is representative of mankind in more ways than one, and first of all in his ignorance. His regiment had listened to the tales of veterans, "tales of gray bewhiskered hordes chewing tobacco with unspeakable valour and sweeping along like the Huns." Still, he cannot put his faith in veterans' tales. Recruits were their prey. They talked of blood, fire, and sudden death, but much of it might have been lies. They were in no wise to be trusted. And the question arises before him whether he will or will not "run from a battle"? He does not know. He cannot know. A little panic fear enters his mind. He jumps up and asks himself aloud, "Good Lord, what's the matter

with me?" This is the first time his words are quoted, on this day before the battle. He dreads not danger, but fear itself. He stands before the unknown. He would like to prove to himself by some reasoning process that he will not "run from the battle." And in his unblooded regiment he can find no help. He is alone with the problem of courage.

In this he stands for the symbol of all untried men.

Some critics have estimated him a morbid case. I cannot agree to that. The abnormal cases are of the extremes; of those who crumple up at the first sight of danger, and of those of whom their fellows say "He doesn't know what fear is." Neither will I forget the rare favourites of the gods whose fiery spirit is only soothed by the fury and clamour of a battle. Of such was General Picton of Peninsular fame. But the lot of the mass of mankind is to know fear, the decent fear of disgrace. Of such is the Young Soldier of "The Red Badge of Courage." He only seems exceptional because he has got inside of him Stephen Crane's imagination, and is presented to us with the insight and the power of expression of an artist whom a just and severe critic, on a review of all his work, has called the foremost impressionist of his time; as Sterne was the greatest impressionist, but in a different way, of his age.

This is a generalized, fundamental judgment. More superficially both Zola's "La Débâcle" and Tolstoi's "War and Peace" were mentioned by critics in connection with Crane's war book. But Zola's main concern was with the downfall of the imperial régime he fancied he was portraying; and in Tolstoi's book the subtle presentation of Rostov's squadron under fire for the first time is a mere episode lost in a mass of other matter, like a handful of pebbles in a heap of sand. I could not see the relevancy. Crane was

concerned with elemental truth only; and in any case I think that as an artist he is non-comparable. He dealt with what is enduring, and was the most detached of men.

That is why his book is short. Not quite two hundred pages. Gems are small. This monodrama, which happy inspiration or unerring instinct has led him to put before us in narrative form, is contained between the opening words I have already quoted and a phrase on page 194 of the English edition, which runs: "He had been to touch the great death, and found that, after all, it was but the great death. He was a man."

On these words the action ends. We are only given one glimpse of the victorious army at dusk, under the falling rain, "a procession of weary soldiers became a bedraggled train, despondent and muttering, marching with churning effort in a trough of liquid brown mud under a low wretched sky . . .", while the last ray of the sun falls on the river through a break in the leaden clouds.

This war book, so virile and so full of gentle sympathy, in which not a single declamatory sentiment defaces the genuine verbal felicity, welding analysis and description in a continuous fascination of individual style, had been hailed by the critics as the herald of a brilliant career. Crane himself very seldom alluded to it, and always with a wistful smile. Perhaps he was conscious that, like the mortally wounded Tall Soldier of his book, who, snatching at the air, staggers out into a field to meet his appointed death on the first day of battle—while the terrified Youth and the kind Tattered Soldier stand by silent, watching with awe "these ceremonies at the place of meeting"—it was his fate, too, to fall early in the fray.

JOHN GALSWORTHY

When in the family's assembly at Timothy Forsyte's house there arose a discussion of Francie Forsyte's verses, Aunt Hester expressed her preference for the poetry of Shelley, Byron and Wordsworth, on the ground that, after reading the works of these poets, "one felt that one had read a book." And the reader of Mr. Galsworthy's latest volume of fiction, whether in accord or in difference with the author's view of his subject, would feel that he had read a book.

Beyond that impression one perceives how difficult it is to get critical hold of Mr. Galsworthy's work. He gives you no opening. Defending no obvious thesis, setting up no theory, offering no cheap panacea, appealing to no naked sentiment, the author of "The Man of Property" disdains also the effective device of attacking insidiously the actors of his own drama, or rather of his dramatic comedy. This is because he does not write for effect, though his writing will be found effective enough for all that. This book is of a disconcerting honesty, backed by a discouraging skill. There is not a single phrase in it written for the sake of its cleverness. Not one. Light of touch, though weighty in feeling, it gives the impression of verbal austerity, of a *willed* moderation of thought. The passages of high literary merit, so uniformly sustained as to escape the notice of the reader, expose the natural and logical development of the story with a purposeful progression which is primarily satisfying to the intelligence, and ends by stirring the emotions. In the

essentials of matter and treatment it is a book of to-day. Its critical spirit and its impartial method are meant for a humanity which has outgrown the stage of fairy tales, realistic, romantic or even epic.

For the fairy tale, be it not ungratefully said, has walked the earth in many unchallenged disguises, and lingers amongst us to this day wearing, sometimes, amazingly heavy clothes. It lingers; and even it lingers with some assurance. Mankind has come of age, but the successive generations still demand artlessly to be amazed, moved and amused. Certain forms of innocent fun will never grow old, I suppose. But the secret of the long life of the fairy tale consists mainly in this, I suspect: that it is amusing to the writer thereof. Whatever public wants it supplies, it ministers first of all to his vanity in an intimate and delightful way. The pride of fanciful invention; the pride of that invention which soars (on goose's wings) into the empty blue is like the intoxication of an elixir sent by the gods above. And whether it is that the gods are unduly generous, or simply because the sight of human folly amuses their idle malice, that sort of felicity is easier attained pen in hand than the sober pride, always mingled with misgivings, of a single-minded observer and conscientious interpreter of reality. This is why the fairy tale, in its various disguises of optimism, pessimism, romanticism, naturalism and what not, will always be with us. And, indeed, that is very comprehensible; the seduction of irresponsible freedom is very great; and to be tied to the earth (even as the hewers of wood and drawers of water are tied to the earth) in the exercise of one's imagination, by every scruple of conscience and honour, may be considered a lot hard enough not to be lightly embraced. This is why novelists are comparatively rare. But we must not exaggerate

This world, even if one is tied fast to its earthy foundations by the subtle and tyrannical bonds of artistic conviction, is not such a bad place to write fiction in. At any rate, we can know of no other; an excellent reason for us to try to think as well as possible of the world we do know.

In this world, whose realities are discovered, interpreted, commented on, criticized and exposed in works of fiction, Mr. Galsworthy selects for the subject-matter of his book the Family, an institution which has been with us as long, I should think, as the oldest and the least venerable pattern of fairy tale. As Mr. Galsworthy, however, is no theorist but an observer, it is a definite kind of family that falls under his observation. It is the middle-class family; and even with more precision, as we are warned in the sub-title, an upper middle-class family anywhere at large in space and time, but a family, if not exactly of to-day, then of only last evening, so to say. Thus at the outset we are far removed from the vagueness of the traditional "once upon a time in a far country there was a king," which somehow always manages to peep through the solemn disguises of fairy tales masquerading as novels with and without purpose. The Forsytes walk the pavement of London and own some of London's houses. They wish to own more; they wish to own them all. And maybe they will. Time is on their side. The Forsytes never die—so Mr. Galsworthy tells us, while we watch them assembling in old Jolyon Forsyte's drawing room on the occasion of June Forsyte's engagement to Mr. Bosinney, incidentally an architect and an artist, but, by the only definition that matters, a man of no property whatever.

A family is not at first sight an alarming phenomenon. But Mr. Galsworthy looks at the Forsytes with the individual vision of a novelist seeking his inspiration

amongst the realities of this earth. He points out to us this family's formidable character as a unit of society, as a reproduction in miniature of society itself. It is made formidable, he says, by the cohesion of its members (between whom there need not exist either affection or even sympathy) upon a concrete point, the possession of property.

The solidity of the foundation laid by Mr. Galsworthy for his fine piece of imaginative work becomes at once apparent. For whichever came first, family or property, in the beginnings of social organization, or whether they came together and were indeed at first scarcely distinguishable from each other, it is clear that in the close alliance of these two institutions society has found the way of its development and nurses the hope of its security. In their sense of property the Forsytes establish the consciousness of their right and the promise of their duration. It is an instinct, a primitive instinct. The practical faculty of the Forsytes has erected it into a principle; their idealism has expanded it into a sort of religion which has shaped their notions of happiness and decency, their prejudices, their piety, such thoughts as they happen to have and the very course of their passions. Life as a whole has come to be perceptible to them exclusively in terms of property. Preservation, acquisition—acquisition, preservation. Their laws, their morality, their art and their science appear to them, justifiably enough, consecrated to that double and unique end. It is the formula of their virtue.

In this world of Forsytes (who never die) organized in view of acquiring and preserving property, Mr. Galsworthy (who is no inventor of didactic fairy tales) places with the sure instinct of a novelist a man and a woman who are no Forsytes, it is true, but whom he

presents as in no sense the declared adversaries of the great principle of property. They only happen to disregard it. And this is a crime. They are simply two people to whom life speaks imperatively in terms of love. And this is enough to establish their irreconcilable antagonism and to precipitate their unavoidable fate. Deprived naturally and suddenly of the support of laws and morality, of all human countenance, and even, in a manner of speaking, of the consolations of religion, they find themselves miserably crushed, both the woman and the man. And the principle of property is vindicated. The woman being the weaker, it is in her case vindicated with consummate cruelty. For a peculiar cowardice is one of the characteristics of this great and living principle. Strong in the worship of so many thousands and in the possession of so many millions, it starts with affright at the slightest challenge, it trembles before mere indifference, it directs its heaviest blows at the disinherited who should appear weakest in its sight. Irene's fate is made unspeakably atrocious, no less—but nothing more. Mr. Galsworthy's instinct and observation serve him well here. In Soames Forsyte's town house, whose front door stands wide open for half an hour or so on a certain foggy night, there is no room for tragedy. It is one of the temples of property, of a sort of unholy religion whose fundamental dogma, public ceremonies and awful secret rites, forming the subject matter of this remarkable novel, take no account of human dignity. Irene, as last seen crushed and alive within the hopeless portals, remains for us a poignantly pitiful figure and nothing more.

This then, roughly and summarily, is the book in its general suggestion. Going on to particulars which make up the intrinsic value of a work of art, it rests

upon the subtle and interdependent relation of Mr. Galsworthy's intellect and feelings which form his temperament, and reveals Mr. Galsworthy's very considerable talent as a writer—a talent so considerable that it commands at once our respectful attention. The foundation of this talent, it seems to me, lies in a remarkable power of ironic insight combined with an extremely keen and faithful eye for all the phenomena on the surface of the life he observes. These are the purveyors of his imagination, whose servant is a style clear, direct, sane, illumined by a perfectly unaffected sincerity. It is the style of a man whose sympathy with mankind is too genuine to allow him the smallest gratification of his vanity at the cost of his fellow creatures. In its moderation it is a style sufficiently pointed to carry deep his remorseless irony and grave enough to be the dignified vehicle of his profound compassion. Its sustained harmony is never interrupted by those bursts of cymbals and fifes which some deaf people acclaim for brilliance. Before all, it is a style well under control, and therefore it never betrays this tender and ironic writer into an odious cynicism of laughter or tears. For there are two kinds of cynicism, the cynicism of the hyena and the cynicism of the crocodile, which last, by the way, commands all sorts of respects from the inhabitants of these Isles. Mr. Galsworthy remains always a man, whether he is amused or moved.

I am afraid that my unavowed intention in writing about this book (of which I have talked so much and said so little) has been discovered by now. Therefore I confess. Confession—public, I mean—is good for one's conscience. Such is my intention. And it would be easier to carry out if I only knew exactly the motives which prompt people to read novels. But I do not

know them all. Some of us, I understand, take up a novel to gratify a natural malevolence, the author being supposed to hold the mirror up to the odiously ridiculous nature of our next-door neighbour. From laboriously collected information I am, however, led to believe that most people read novels for amusement. This is as it should be. But, whatever be their motives, I entertain towards all novel-readers (for reasons which must remain concealed from the readers of this paper) the feelings of warm and respectful affection. I would not try to deceive them for worlds. Never! This being understood, I go on to declare, in the peace of my heart and the serenity of my conscience, that if they want amusement they will find it between the covers of this book. They will find plenty of it in this episode in the history of the Forsytes, where the reconciliation of a father and son, the dramatic and poignant comedy of Soames Forsyte's marital relations, and the tragedy of Bosinney's failure are exposed to our gaze with the remorseless yet sympathetic irony of Mr. Galsworthy's art, in the light of the unquenchable fire burning on the altar of property. They will find amusement, and perhaps also something more lasting—if they care for it. I say this with all the reserves and qualifications which strict truth requires around every statement of opinion. Mr. Galsworthy may possibly be found disappointing by some, but he will never be found futile by any one, and never uninteresting by the most exacting. I myself, for instance, am not so sure of Bosinney's tragedy. But this hesitation of my mind, for which the author may not be wholly responsible after all, need only be mentioned and no more, in the face of his considerable achievement.

A GLANCE AT TWO BOOKS

THE national English novelist seldom regards his work—the exercise of his Art—as an achievement of active life by which he will produce certain definite effects upon the emotions of his readers, but simply as an instinctive, often unreasoned, outpouring of his own emotions. He does not go about building up his book with a precise intention and a steady mind. It never occurs to him that a book is a deed, that the writing of it is an enterprise as much as the conquest of a colony. He has no such clear conception of his craft. Writing from a full heart, he liberates his soul for the satisfaction of his own sentiment; and when he has finished the scene he is at liberty to strike his forehead and exclaim: "This is genius!"

Thackeray is reported to have done this, and there is no reason why any novelist of his type should not. He is, as a matter of fact, writing lyrically (a lyric is the expression of a mood); he is expressing his own moods: I take what the gods give me—he says in all humility, and when the godhead inspires him with what seems good to his heart, to his imagination, to his tenderness or to his indignation, he may say, and use the words literally, "This is genius!"

It is. And it is probably the reason why the distinctively English novelist is always at his best in denunciations of institutions, of types or of conventionalized society.

It is comparatively easy for us, when we are really moved by the clearness of our vision, to convince an

audience that Messrs. A., B. and C. are callous, ferocious or cowardly. We should have to use much more conscious art to give a permanent impression of those gentlemen as purely altruist.

Thus Mr. Osborne, the hard merchant, father of Captain Osborne, is more definite and flawless than many of Thackeray's so-called good characters; and thus Mr. Pecksniff is, through scorn and dislike, rendered more memorable than the brothers Cheeryble. It is not perhaps so much that these distinguished writers were completely incapable of loving their fellow men simply as men, exposed to suffering, temptation and affliction, as that, neglecting the one indispensable thing, neglecting to use their powers of selection and observation, they emotionally excelled in rendering the disagreeable. And that is easy. To find beauty, grace, charm in the bitterness of truth is a graver task.

Thackeray, we imagine, did not love his gentle heroines. He did not love them. He was in love with the sentiments they represented. He was, in fact, in love with what does not exist—and that is why Amelia Osborne does not exist, either in colour, in shape, in grace, in goodness. Turgeniev probably did not love his Lisa, a most pathetic, pure, charming and profound creation, for what she was, in her creator's mind. He loved her disinterestedly, as it were, out of pure warmth of heart, as a human being in the tumult and hazard of life. And that is why we must feel, suffer and live with that wonderful creation. That is why she is as real to us as her stupid mother, as the men of the story, as the sombre Varvard, and all the others that may be called the unpleasant characters in "The House of Gentlefolk."

I have been reading two books in English which have attracted a good deal of intelligent attention, but

neither seems to have been considered as attentively as they might have been from this point of view. The one, "The Island Pharisees," by Mr. John Galsworthy, is a very good example of the national novel: the other, "Green Mansions," by Mr. W. H. Hudson, is a proof that love, the pure love of rendering the external aspects of things, can exist side by side with the national novel in English letters.

Mr. Galsworthy's hero in "The Island Pharisees," during his pilgrimage right across the English social system, asks himself: "Why? Why is not the world better? Why are we all humbugs? Why is the social system so out of order?" And he gets no answer to his questions, for, indeed, in his mood no answer is possible, neither is an answer needed for the absolute value of the book. Shelton is dissatisfied with his own people, who are good people, with artists, whose "at homes" he drops into, with marriage settlements and wedding services, with cosmopolitan vagabonds, with Oxford dons, with policemen—with himself and his love.

The exposition of all the characters in the book is done with an almost unerring touch, with a touch indeed that recalls the sureness and the delicacy of Turgeniev's handling. They all live—and Mr. Galsworthy—or rather his hero, John Shelton, finds them all Pharisaic. It is as if he were championing against all these "good" people some intangible lost cause, some altruism, some higher truth that for ever seems to soar out of his grasp. It is not exactly that Shelton is made to uphold the bitter morality of the cosmopolitan vagabond; for Mr. Galsworthy is too good an artist and too good a philosopher to make his Louis Ferrand impossibly attractive or even possibly cynical.

Shelton upholds, not so much the fact as the ideal of honest revolt; he is the knight errant of a general idea.

Therein he ceases to resemble the other heroes of English fiction who are the champions of particular ideas, tilting sometimes at windmills (for the human power of self-deception is great), but with a particular foe always in their eye. Shelton distinctly does not couch his lance against a windmill. He is a knight errant, disarmed and faithful, riding forlorn to an inevitable defeat; his adversary is a giant of a thousand heads and a thousand arms, a monster at once perfectly human and altogether soulless. Though nobody dies in the book, it is really the record of a long and tragic adventure, whose tragedy is not so much in the event as in the very atmosphere, in the cold moral dusk in which the hero moves as if impelled by some fatal whisper, without a sword, corselet or helmet.

Amadis de Gaul would have struck a head off and counted it a doughty deed; Dickens would have flung himself upon pen and paper and made a caricature of the monster, would have flung at him an enormous joke vibrating with the stress of cheap emotions; Shelton, no legendary knight and being no humorist (but, like many simpler men, impelled by the destiny he carries within his breast), goes forth to be delivered, bound hand and foot, to the monster by his charming and limited Antonia. He is classed as an outsider by men in the best clubs, and his prospective mother-in-law tells him not to talk about things. He comes to grief socially, because in a world, which everyone is interested to go on calling the best of all possible worlds, he has insisted upon touching in challenge all the shields hung before all the comfortable tents: the immaculate shield of his fiancée, of his mother-in-law, of the best men in the best clubs. He gets himself called and thought of as Unsound; and there in his social world the monster has made an end of him.

This is the end of the book; and with it there comes into the world of letters the beginning of Mr. Galsworthy as a novelist. For, paradoxically, a society that could not stand a Hamlet in the flesh at any price will read about him and welcome him on the stage to the end of its own incorrigible existence. This book, where each page lives with an interest of its own, has for its only serious artistic defect that of not being long enough, and for its greatest quality that of a sincere feeling of compassionate regard for mankind expressed nationally through a fine indignation. Of the promise of its method, of the accomplished felicity of its phrasing, I have left myself no room to speak.

The innermost heart of "Green Mansions," which are the forests of Mr. Hudson's book, is tender, is tranquil, is steeped in that pure love of the external beauty of things that seems to breathe upon us from the pages of Turgeniev's work. The charming quietness of the style soothes the hard irritation of our daily life in the presence of a fine and sincere, of a deep and pellucid personality. If the other book's gift is lyric, "Green Mansions" comes to us with the tone of the elegy. There are the voices of the birds, the shadows of the forest leaves, the Indians gliding through them armed with their blowpipes, the monkeys peering sadly from above, the very spiders! The birds search for insects; spiders hunt their prey.

"Now as I sat looking down on the leaves and the small dancing shadow, scarcely thinking of what I was looking at, I noticed a small spider with a flat body and short legs creep cautiously out on to the upper surface of a small leaf. Its pale red colour, barred with velvet black, first drew my attention to it; for it was beautiful to the eye. . . ."

"It was beautiful to the eye," so it drew the atten-

tion of Mr. Hudson's hero. In that phrase dwells the very soul of the book whose voice is soothing like a soft voice speaking steadily amongst the vivid changes of a dream. Only you must note that the spider had come to hunt its prey, having mistaken the small dancing shadow for a fly, because it is there in the fundamental difference of vision lies the difference between book and book. The other type of novelist might say: "It attracted my attention because it was savage and cruel and beautiful only to the eye. And I have written of it here so that it may be hated and laughed at for ever. For of course being greedy and rapacious it was stupid also, mistaking a shadow for substance, like certain evil men, we have heard of, that go about crying up the excellence of the world."

PREFACE

To "The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad"

The idea of publishing a volume of selected stories has not been received without a good deal of hesitation on my part. So much in fact as to drive me into the dangerous attempt to disclose the state of the feelings with which I approach this explanatory preface. My hesitation was, I may say, of a private character; private in the sense of being rooted deep in my personality, and not easily explainable even to such good friends as it has been my fortune to find in the American public. The deep, complex (and at times even contradictory) feelings which make up the very essence of an author's attitude to his own creation are real enough, yet they may be, often are, but shapes of cherished illusions. Frail plants, you will admit, and fit only for the shade of solitary thought. Precious—perhaps? Yes. But by their very nature precious to only one man, to him in whose mind—or is it the heart?—they are rooted.

That consideration would seem to me conclusive against any one writing any preface whatever, if it were not for my ineradicable suspicion that in this world, which some philosophers have defined merely as a series of "vain appearances," our very illusions must have a practical meaning. Are they not as characteristic of an individual as his opinions, for instance, or the features of his face? In fact, being less controllable they must be even more dangerously revelatory. This

is an alarming consideration. But whether because of a strain of native impudence, acquired callousness, or inborn trust in the goodness of human nature, it has not prevented me during the last few years from writing a good many revelatory prefaces, for which I have not been, so far, called to account. At any rate, no incensed man with a shotgun has yet called here to invite me to desist. Thus encouraged, here I am again volunteering yet one more of these sincere confessions.

To begin with, I may venture to affirm that, however spontaneous the initial impulse, not one of the stories from which those included in this volume have been selected was achieved without much conscious thought bearing not only on the problems of their style but upon their relation to life as I have known it, and on the nature of my reactions to the particular instances as well as to the general tenor of my personal experience. This gave to each of the successive tales, composed at various times and in varied mental conditions, a characteristic tone of its own. At least I thought so. Later, when I had to consider my past work in detail, in order to write the Author's Notes for my first collected edition, I was confirmed in my impression that each of my short-story volumes had a consistent unity of outlook covering the mingled subjects of civilization and wilderness, of land life and life on the sea.

It would not be too much to say that this trait would be apparent to the least critical of readers, in, for instance, the "Tales of Unrest." No story from that volume is included in this collection for a reason which will become apparent later to the patient reader of this Preface. It is the very first collection of short stories I ever published, with a range of scene including the Malay Archipelago, rustic Brittany, Central Africa, and the interior of an upper middle-class house in a

residential street of London. It also seems to me perfectly clear on the face of it, that the volume called "A Set of Six"—from which one story has been selected for this book—is very different in its consistent mood of clear and detached presentation from any other volume of short stories which I have published before or after. Yet, in Time, it covers almost the whole of the nineteenth century; and in Space it moves from South America through England and Russia to end in the south of Italy. A benevolent critic has remarked to me privately that it was the least atmospheric of all my works; and from my point of view I accepted this as a tribute to that inner consistency which I would claim for every set of my shorter tales. In the same way in the case of the volume "Within the Tides" I take the opinion expressed by one of the reviewers: "that the whole of the book seemed to produce the impression of being greater than its component parts" as a confirmation of my sentiment of having welded the diversities of subject and treatment into a consistency characteristic, in its nature, of a certain period of my literary production.

The friendly reader will understand how, holding that belief on the subject of my shorter productions, I would recoil at first from taking any of my stories out of their appointed places in the group to which they originally belonged. And this the more because their grouping was never the result of a preconceived plan. It "just happened." And things that "just happen" in one's work seem impressive and valuable because they spring from sources profounder than the logic of a deliberate theory suggested by acquiring learning, let us say, or by lessons drawn from analysed practice. And no one need quarrel for such a view with an artist for whom self-expression must, by definition, be the

principal object, if not the only *raison d'être*, of his existence. He will naturally take for his own, for better or worse, all the characteristics of his work; since all of them, intended or not intended, make up the individuality of his self-expression.

I suspect there are moments when what a man most values in his work—I mean even a man of action—is precisely the part the general mystery of things plays in its shaping: the discovery of those qualities that have "just happened" in that obscure region where honest success or honourable failure is unconsciously elaborated. But there are moments too when one's idealism (for idealism is practical and sane and the enemy of things that "just happen" and suchlike mysteries) prompts one to take up a different, more precise view of one's achievement—whatever it may be.

It must have been in one of those moments that the suggestion of a selected volume of my shorter stories came before me from my old friend and publisher, Mr. F. N. Doubleday, who is an idealist and who would simply hate to let anything "just happen" in his business. His business, to my mind, consists, mainly, in being the intermediary between certain men's reveries and the wide-awake brain of the rest of the world. Stated like this it seems a strangely fantastic occupation; yet his ways of carrying it on are always of a practical sort. I have learned to trust his conclusions implicitly on that ground. Also, for reasons of a deeper personal kind, having nothing to do with business, his words have great weight with me. But in order to reconcile my own idealism to the notion of taking the stories out of their natural surroundings, out of their native atmosphere as it were, some principle of selection had to be found. The only one that offered itself with any chance of being acceptable was the principle of

classification by subject; one that, whatever its disadvantages, has at least the advantage of being immune from the infection of illusions.

But I soon found that for a writer whose simple purpose has ever been the sincere rendering of his own deeper and more sympathetic emotions in the face of his belief in men and things—the philosopher's "vain appearances" which yet have endured, poignant or amusing, for so many ages, moving processionally towards the End of the World, which when it comes will be the vainest thing of all—the principle was not so easy in its application as it seemed to be at first sight. Though I have been often classed as a writer of the sea I have always felt that I had no specialty in that or any other specific subject. It is true that I have found a full text of life on the sea, long before I thought of writing a line or even felt the faintest stirring towards self-expression by means of the printed word. Sea life had been my life. It had been my own self-sufficient, self-satisfying possession. When the change came over the spirit of my dream (Calderon said that "Life is a Dream") my past had, by the very force of my work, become one of the sources of what I may call, for want of a better word, my inspiration—of the inner force which sets the pen in motion. I would add here "for better or worse," if those words did not sound horribly ungrateful after so many proofs of sympathy from the public for which this particular Preface is destined.

As a matter of fact I have written of the sea very little if the pages were counted. It has been the scene, but very seldom the aim, of my endeavour. It is too late after all those years to try to keep back the truth; so I will confess here that when I launched my first paper boats in the days of my literary childhood, I aimed at an element as restless, as dangerous, as change-

able as the sea, and even more vast;—the unappeasable ocean of human life. I trust this grandiloquent image will be accepted with an indulgent smile of the kind that is accorded to the lofty ambitions of well-meaning beginners. Much time has passed since, and I can assure my readers that I have never felt more humble than I do to-day while I sit tracing these words, and that I see now, more clearly than ever before, that indeed those were but paper boats, freighted with a grown-up child's dreams and launched innocently upon that terrible sea that, unlike the honest salt water of my early life, knows no hope of changing horizons but lies within the circle of an Eternal Shadow.

Approaching the problem of selection for this book in the full consciousness of my feelings, my concern was to give it some sort of unity, or in other words, its own character. Looking over the directive impulses of my writing life I discovered my guide in the one that had prompted me so often to deal with men whose existence was, so to speak, cast early upon the waters. Thus the characteristic trait of the stories included in this volume consists in the central figure of each being a seaman presented either in the relations of his professional life with his own kind, or in contact with landsmen and women, and embroiled in the affairs of that larger part of mankind which dwells on solid earth.

It would have been misleading to label those productions as sea tales. They deal with feelings of universal import, such, for instance, as the sustaining and inspiring sense of youth, or the support given by a stolid courage which confronts the unmeasurable force of an elemental fury simply as a thing that has got to be met and lived through with professional constancy. Of course, there is something more than mere ideas in those stories. I modestly hope that there are human

beings in them, and also the articulate appeal of their humanity so strangely constructed from inertia and restlessness, from weakness and from strength and many other interesting contradictions which affect their conduct, and in a certain sense are meant to give a colouring to the actual events of the tale, and even to the response which is expected from the reader. To call them "studies of seamen" would have been pretentious and even misleading, in view of the obscurity of the individuals and the private character of the incidents. "Shorter Tales" is yet the best title I can think of for this collection. It commends itself to me by its non-committal character, which will neither raise false hopes nor awaken blind antagonisms.

Why a volume aiming at unity should be wilfully divided into two parts is explained by my desire to give prominence to the stories which begin them: "Youth," which is certainly a piece of autobiography ("emotions remembered in tranquillity"), and "Typhoon," which, defined from a purely descriptive point of view, is the shorter of the two storm-pieces which I have written at different times.

From another point of view, the "guiding" point of view (that is of each story being concerned with a man who is also a seaman), the first part deals with younger and the second with older men. I hardly need say that in the arrangement of those two parts there has been no attempt at chronological order.

Therefore let neither friend nor enemy look for the development of the writer's literary faculty in this collection. As far as that is concerned, the book is a jumble. The unity of purpose lies elsewhere. In Part First, "Youth" speaks for itself, both in its triumphant feeling and in its wistful regrets. The second story deals with what may be called the "*esprit de*

corps," the deep fellowship of two young seamen meeting for the first time. Those two tales may be regarded as purely professional. Of the other two in Part First, one, it must be confessed, is written round a ship rather than round a seaman. The last, trying to render the effect of the fascination of a roving life, has the hard lot of a woman for its principal interest.

Part Two deals with men of a more mature age. There is no denying that in the typhoon which is being wrestled with by Captain McWhirr, it is the typhoon that takes on almost a symbolic figure. The next story is the story of a married seaman, badly married I admit, whose humanity to a pathetic waif spoils his life for him. The third is the story of a swindle, to be frank, planned on shore, but the sympathetic person is a seaman all right. The last may be looked upon as a story of a seaman's love for a very silent girl; but what I tried partly to suggest there was the existence of certain straightforward characters combining a natural ruthlessness with an unexpected depth of moral delicacy. Falk obeys the law of self-preservation pitilessly; but at the crucial moment of his bizarre love story he will not condescend to dodge the truth—the horrid truth! Finally, let me say that with the exception of "Youth" none of these stories is a record of experience in the absolute sense of the word. As I have said before in another preface, they are all authentic because they are the product of twenty years of life—my own life. Deliberate invention had little to do with their existence—if they do exist. In each there lurks more than one intention. The facts gleaned from hearsay or experience in the various parts of the globe were but opportunities offered to the writer. What he has done with them is matter for a verdict which must be left to the individual consciences of the readers.

COOKERY

A Preface to "A Handbook of Cookery for a Small House," by Jessie Conrad

Of all the books produced since the most remote ages by human talents and industry those only that treat of cooking are, from a moral point of view, above suspicion. The intention of every other piece of prose may be discussed and even mistrusted; but the purpose of a cookery book is one and unmistakable. Its object can conceivably be no other than to increase the happiness of mankind.

This general consideration, and also a feeling of affectionate interest with which I am accustomed to view all the actions of the writer, prompt me to set down these few words of introduction for her book. Without making myself responsible for her teaching (I own that I find it impossible to read through a cookery book), I come forward modestly but gratefully as a Living Example of her practice. That practice I dare pronounce most successful. It has been for many priceless years adding to the sum of my daily happiness.

Good cooking is a moral agent. By good cooking I mean the conscientious preparation of the simple food of everyday life, not the more or less skilful concoction of idle feasts and rare dishes. Conscientious cookery is an enemy to gluttony. The trained delicacy of the palate, like a cultivated delicacy of sentiment, stands in the way of unseemly excesses. The decency of our life is for a great part a matter of good taste, of the

correct appreciation of what is fine in simplicity. The intimate influence of conscientious cooking by rendering easy the processes of digestion promotes the serenity of mind, the graciousness of thought, and that indulgent view of our neighbours' failings which is the only genuine form of optimism. Those are its titles to our reverence.

A great authority upon North American Indians accounted for the sombre and excessive ferocity characteristic of these savages by the theory that as a race they suffered from perpetual indigestion. The Noble Red Man was a mighty hunter but his wives had not mastered the art of conscientious cookery. And the consequences were deplorable. The Seven Nations around the Great Lakes and the Horse-tribes of the Plains were but one vast prey to raging dyspepsia. The Noble Red Men were great warriors, great orators, great masters of outdoor pursuits; but the domestic life of their wigwams was clouded by the morose irritability which follows the consumption of ill-cooked food. The gluttony of their indigestible feasts was a direct incentive to counsels of unreasonable violence. Victims of gloomy imaginings, they lived in abject submission to the wiles of a multitude of fraudulent medicine men—quacks—who haunted their existence with vain promises and false nostrums from the cradle to the grave.

It is to be remarked that the quack of modern civilization, the vendor of patent medicine, preys mainly upon the races of Anglo-Saxon stock who are also great warriors, great orators, mighty hunters, great masters of outdoor pursuits. No virtues will avail for happiness if the righteous art of cooking be neglected by the national conscience. We owe much to the fruitful meditations of our sages, but a sane view of life is, after

all, elaborated mainly in the kitchen—the kitchen of the small house, the abode of the preponderant majority of the people. And a sane view of life excludes the belief in patent medicine. The conscientious cook is the natural enemy of the quack without a conscience; and thus his labours make for the honesty, and favour the amenity, of our existence. For a sane view of life can be no other than kindly and joyous, but a believer in patent medicine is steeped in the gloom of vague fears, the sombre attendants of disordered digestion.

Strong in this conviction, I introduce this little book to the inhabitants of the little houses who are the arbiters of the nation's destiny. Ignorant of the value of its methods, I have no doubt whatever as to its intention. It is highly moral. There cannot be the slightest question as to that; for is it not a cookery book? —the only product of the human mind altogether above suspicion.

In that respect no more need, or indeed can, be said. As regards the practical intention, I gather that no more than the clear and concise exposition of elementary principles has been the author's aim. And this too is laudable, because modesty is a becoming virtue in an artist. It remains for me only to express the hope that by correctness of practice and soundness of precept this little book will be able to add to the cheerfulness of nations.

THE FUTURE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

To the Editor of *The Times*, November 7, 1912.

Sir,

How long the last, Asiatic, phase of the history of the Turks—Sultanate of Damascus or Caliphate of Baghdad—may last, no one can say. That its European chapter is closed few only can doubt. But nobody will deny that a fierce scramble for Constantinople amongst the victors would be a most unseemly and disturbing complication.

The Serbs and Bulgars have no definite historical claim to advance. Greece has that, of course. But it must go very far back, to Byzantium—the old obscure colony. And really I cannot imagine this most democratic of kingdoms desiring a capital other than Athens—the very cradle of democracy, matchless in the wonders of its life and the vicissitudes of its history.

The Constantinople of which I think is not the Greek colony. It is the Imperial and symbolic city, one of the refuges of European civilization and the fit object of Europe's care. It should rest at last under the joint guarantee of all the Powers, after its infinitely varied, stormy, and tragic existence of august dominion, desperate wars, and abject slavery. It should find a dignified peace as an independent city, with a small territory, governed by an elected Senate (in which all the races of its population would be represented) and by—I won't call him its Burgomaster—let us say its

Patrician, as the executive head. The Balkan Powers might be co-jointly entrusted with his nomination. This would, to a certain extent, secure the share of Slavonic influence, since in the Senate the Greeks, I imagine, would predominate.

The independent Constantinople of my vision would be the splendid spiritual capital of the Balkan Peninsula naturally; its intellectual capital almost certainly. Commercially, too, as a free port, it would have all the chances, though Salonika may turn out a serious competitor. The various capitals of the Balkan States, residences of Courts and centres of political life, need not be jealous of the unique city which has done so much for the organization of mankind.

From its geographical position the Powers could easily give effective protection to that small municipal state. This plan, of course, implies free Dardanelles (but that seems already certain) and neutralized Bosphorus.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
J. CONRAD.

November, 1912.

PERHAPS you will allow me to expand a little the idea thrown out in my letter to *The Times*. Of its reception at large I know nothing—and perhaps it does not merit any sort of reception. Of course, when one puts down anything in the shape of a proposal one does think over the objections. I am not inclined to believe a notion right and feasible simply because it has occurred to me. I am not of that happy temperament. Still, when the first man who read my letter turned upon me with the words, "So you too, I see, have joined the ideologues," I believe my cheek blanched.

This was a pretty heavy charge to bring against a man conscious of being guilty of no worse crime than a little imagination. But it was not the severity of the indictment nor yet the knowledge that "ideologue" was the term of utmost scorn in the mouth of Napoleon I which disturbed me. I was not frightened or angry. I was extremely surprised. Ideologue! And I had meant my suggestion to be eminently practical. Practical—that is, strictly in accordance with the fitness of things.

For to any one with a little historical sense it is not in the fitness of things that Constantinople should become the capital of a Bulgarian kingdom. I do not wish to hurt youthful susceptibilities but frankly the city of the Bosphorus is too great, too illustrious for that fate. The crash of its fall reëchoed ominously from one end of Christendom to the other. Its liberation will send a mournful whisper of angry dismay through the Mussulman world. And the event at which we look is historically too momentous for anything but the indestructible city itself, the jewel of the Balkans and once the only luminous spot through nearly five centuries of European night, to be its commemorative monument.

If this be mere ideology then I am safe to say it has its inciting cause in a perfectly clear view of possible eventualities. Let us piously hope that the dawn of peace for the Peninsula will succeed this lurid conflagration. The waned Crescent is setting for ever; but to a calm observer the dawn seems a long way yet below the horizon. There will be many questions to be settled between themselves by the Balkan Children of the Cross—not to speak of some other outside Christians with views of their own. And what if amongst other things we were to see before many years a war

between Greece and Bulgaria for the possession of Constantinople?

For in fact, historically and racially, Greece alone has a claim to Constantinople. But who is going to hand it over to her now? The Bulgarians are nearer, and, we are given to understand, intoxicated with their success.

But in this success they are not alone; and you cannot cut the crown of victory into four pieces and present each combatant with one fourth of immortal glory. The only sane way is to leave the Imperial City outside the field of dispute by a guaranteed agreement. There will be spoil enough—whether cut and dried already or likely to turn out an awkward morsel to carve —to repay the blood and treasure. For as to risks taken, there were none to be proud of in this enterprise.

As to the difficulty of staying the conquering army, that is only the lofty verbiage of elation. A disciplined army can always be stayed. The Russian army was stayed at San Stefano, and its victory, if not so swift and more dearly bought, was quite as complete. And indeed I would not deny to any of the combatants the satisfaction of triumphal entry. It is what comes after that will count.

Let us be sincere in this matter. This game was played for unequal stakes. For Turkey was staking her very head, while the Allies risked no more than a more or less severe blood-letting. We know that if the fortune of war had gone the other way, unanimous Europe would have stopped it with the *status quo* declaration and the hand of Turkey would have been stayed. This fact, of which not a single Balkanian of them all ever had the slightest doubt, should make them amenable to reason in the final settlement.

Nobody wishes to rob them of what is won. Con-

stantinople would remain a joint possession, but with a life and dignity of its own, till—till another Eastern Empire comes into being. And I think it would be a rational arrangement. The same objector, while I was trying to parry the charge of being an ideologue, lunged at me with the affirmation that this was "working for Russia." I confess that I don't understand that thrust. I think that for some time the possession of Constantinople has ceased to be one of the immediate aims of Russian policy. But even so, I don't see how I am serving any such dark purpose. It would be certainly easier to make war on Bulgaria and take Constantinople from it than to lay violent hands on a defenceless free town under a European guarantee, to which Russia herself would be a party. Not to mention the fact that such an aggression would be considered a *casus belli* not only by one but by all the Balkan powers (including Greece), the joint guardians of the city under Europe's sanction.

But as far as Russia's desire of an open Black Sea is concerned, the plan should certainly meet with her approval. I don't think that Russia would like to see numerous batteries of Bulgarian guns on the heights behind the town, sealing up the Bosphorus most effectually even without the help of the Turks on the other side. Indeed, I don't believe Russia would contemplate such a possibility for a moment. And how would Bulgaria (or Greece for that matter) like the obligation of an unarmed capital and the limitations of her sovereign rights in the matter of defence?

A neutralized Bosphorus and a free Constantinople would arouse no envy, no jealousies, and give no offence. Constantinople, a religious and intellectual capital—a common possession, giving no umbrage to any one—a holy city of infinite prestige and incom-

parable beauty. And I am even thinking here of the Mohammedans. There will be, no doubt, many Muslims left in the peninsula, industrious and peaceable citizens of the Christian states. To them also Constantinople shall be a holy city; for the religious head of Mohammedans in Europe would be residing there, nominated by the Caliph in Asia, subject to confirmation by the Balkan powers.

It seems to me too that such a solution of the Constantinople problem would soothe to a certain extent the grief and unrest of Mussulmans all the world over. A consideration worth the notice of the European States which have become by conquest masters of Mohammedan territories.

The details of organization, in which all the races of the peninsula would be justly represented, cannot be a matter of insuperable difficulty. Every Bulgarian, Greek, Serb, or Montenegrin entering Constantinople should be able to say: "I am at home here. This ground on which I stand has been liberated by me and my brothers and this Imperial City, free to us all and subject to no one, is the splendid monument of our victory."

THE CONGO DIARY

Introduction

The diary kept by Joseph Conrad in the Congo in 1890, or such of it as has survived (for there is no saying whether there was more or not), is contained in two small black penny notebooks, and is written in pencil. One carries his initials, J. C. K.—Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski. The first entry is dated June 13, 1890, but in the second notebook dates are practically discarded, and it is impossible to say when the last entry was made. And names of places, also, are practically discarded in the second notebook, while abounding in the first, so that, though we can see that the diary was begun at Matadi, we cannot discover where it was ended. The last place mentioned is Lulanga, far up the great sweep of the Congo River to the north of the Equator, but there remain some twenty-four pages of the diary beyond that entry in which no name whatsoever appears. It must, indeed, have been continued into the very heart of that immense darkness where the crisis of his story, "Heart of Darkness," is unfolded. We know from "A Personal Record" that he reached ultimately somewhere to the neighbourhood of Stanley Falls; and Stanley Falls are farther from Lulanga than Lulanga is from Stanley Pool.

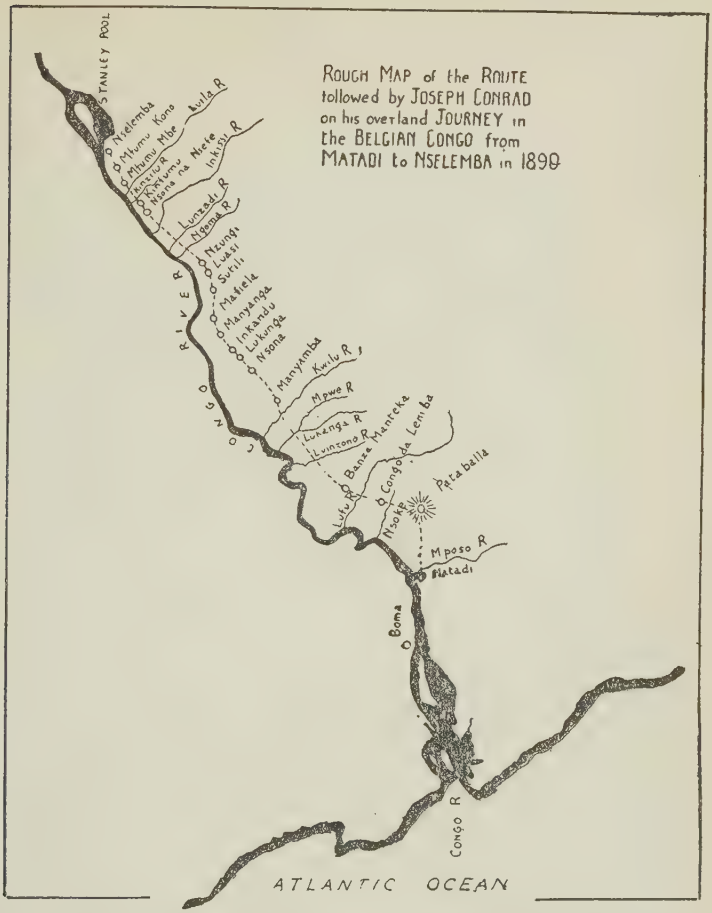
And it is in this same book that we can read how the Polish boy, when nine years of age, looking upon a map of Africa, had put his finger upon its unexplored centre, and had said to himself, "When I grow up I shall go

there." Go there he did, and these notebooks are the first expression of his fulfilled resolve.

The map will enable the reader to plot out, with reasonable accuracy, the exact route followed by Conrad on his overland journey, from Matadi, which is about one hundred miles above the mouth of the Congo, to Nselemba, on or near the southeast corner of Stanley Pool—a distance of probably more than two hundred and fifty miles from Matadi—where it was that he joined the *Roi des Belges*, as second in command, for the up-river voyage. The places and streams alluded to on this overland journey have been given on the map in Conrad's own spelling, even where their names have been altered (unless beyond recognition, which may have happened in certain instances) in existing atlases, many of which have been examined, or can only be placed approximately, owing to their not being mentioned at all. The mapping of the Congo is not in a very advanced state, and, what with the paucity of the entries and the contradictory nature of the information, precise accuracy is not attainable. All the same, it is easy enough to trace the general line of his march, which lay much nearer the banks of the Congo than lies the railway which now runs between Matadi and Kinshasa on Stanley Pool.

The following is a reproduction of the first notebook alone—not, however, of the list of names, persons, books, stores, and the calculations that fill the last pages—consisting of thirty-two manuscript pages, not all of which are full, and twelve of which are further curtailed by Conrad's sectional drawings of the day's march. The given spelling and abbreviations have been adhered to throughout—they help to heighten its true flavour—but the paragraphing and the punctuation have been freely altered.

I may mention that these two notebooks are now preserved in the library of Harvard University, and



that when I was in America in 1925 I saw them again in their new and permanent home and checked the text once more.

As to the appended footnotes, their chief purpose has been to show how closely some of the earlier pages of "Heart of Darkness" are a recollection of Conrad's own Congo journey. This story was serialized in *Blackwood's Magazine* between February and April, 1899, and I remember Conrad telling me that its 40,000 words occupied only about a month in writing. When we consider the painful, slow labour with which he usually composed, we can perceive how intensely vivid his memories of this experience must have been, and, to judge from the parallel passages, how intensely actual. But then the notebook only goes to prove the almost self-evident contention that much of Conrad's work is founded upon autobiographical remembrance. Conrad himself wrote of this story in his Author's Note to the new edition of the "Youth" volume in which it appeared: "'Heart of Darkness' is quite as authentic in fundamentals as 'Youth' . . . it is experience pushed a little (and only a little) beyond the actual facts of the case." If only he had kept a diary of his meeting and association with Kurtz!

The pages of The Concord Edition of "Youth" —the edition always referred to in the notes—which bear direct reference to the first volume of the diary, are only three, 70–72, but in these few pages there are an astonishing number of touches strongly reminiscent of the diary. One would argue, indeed, that he must have consulted the diary when writing the story, but Mrs. Conrad assures me that it was not so. Twice had she saved it from the wastepaper basket, and probably by the time "Heart of Darkness" came to be written Conrad had forgotten all about it, or did not dream that it had survived. He never spoke to me of it, and I never heard of its existence until after his death.

The second notebook, which is an entirely technical

account of Congo navigation, written, no doubt, in relation to the then river charts, is not printed here, simply because it has no personal or literary interest. It is much longer than the first notebook, and is contained on seventy-nine pages, apart from several pages of rough outline maps. I reproduce a portion of one page, in order to show a sample:

"11. N. (A) Long reach to a curved point. Great quantity of dangerous snags along the star[d] shore. Follow the slight bend of the shore with caution. The Middle of the Channel is a S—B— [sand bank] always covered. The more northerly of the two islands has its lower end bare of trees covered with grass and light green low bushes, then a low flat, and the upper end is timbered with light trees of a darker green tint."

It will be seen from this passage, which, though typical, is less technical than most, that the second notebook is not really, like the first, so much in the nature of a diary as of a specific aid to navigation. But those who recall the river journey in "Heart of Darkness," with its dangers and its difficulties, will perceive how this notebook, too, has played its special and impersonal part in the construction of that story.

The title-page of the first notebook is almost all torn out, but the title-page of the second reads, "Up-river Book, commenced 3 August 1890, S.S. *Roi des Belges*." Long ago, when I was making, from Conrad's dictation, a list of the ships he had sailed in, he wrote opposite *Roi des Belges*—"'Heart of Darkness,' 'Out-post.'" And, in truth, hints for "Heart of Darkness," reminders of "Heart of Darkness," lie thick upon the pages of the first notebook, though "An Outpost of Progress"—"the lightest part of the loot I carried off from Central

Africa," to quote his Author's Note to "Tales of Unrest," in which it was published—is only visible in the diary by the implication of the tropical African atmosphere.

No other diary of Conrad's is extant, and I am very sceptical as to whether he ever kept another. He was not at all that type of man, and his piercing memory for essentials was quite sufficient for him to recreate powerfully vanished scenes and figures for the purposes of his work. In 1890, of course, he had published nothing, and though we know that the unfinished MS. (seven chapters) of "Almayer's Folly" accompanied him on his Congo journey—"A Personal Record" describes how it was nearly lost on the river—yet it is doubtful whether he seriously envisaged its appearance in print at a future date. It was largely the breakdown of Conrad's health, due to this very trip, that caused him finally to abandon the sea, and if he had not abandoned the sea, how could he have become a novelist in the accepted sense? Unless we assume that genius must always find means of full expression—a big assumption and quite beyond proof—we owe it really to an accident that Conrad adopted writing as a career. Without this journey, and, therefore, without this diary, where would have been the great Conrad novels?

Thirty-four years to a day from beginning the second notebook, Conrad died—August 3, 1924. Reading it again, I find, as I am continually finding, how many things there are which I would have liked to ask him and never did ask him, and how much I want to know, which I never now can know. Well, that is always what happens when our friends depart. This diary is only a strange, tantalizing fragment and must eternally remain so. Yet it has a value of its own, both real

and romantic, and I am glad to be able to give it to the world.

RICHARD CURLE.

THE DIARY

Arrived at Matadi[1] on the 13th of June, 1890.

Mr. Gosse, chief of the station (O. K.) retaining us for some reason of his own.

Made the acquaintance of Mr. Roger Casement,[2] which I should consider as a great pleasure under any circumstances and now it becomes a positive piece of luck. Thinks, speaks well, most intelligent and very sympathetic.

Feel considerably in doubt about the future. Think just now that my life amongst the people (white) around here cannot be very comfortable. Intend avoid acquaintances as much as possible.

Through Mr. R. C. have made the acquain^{ce} of Mr. Underwood, the Manager of the English Factory (Hatton & Cookson) in Kalla Kalla. Av^{ge} com^{al}—hearty and kind. Lunched there on the 21st.

24th. Gosse and R. C. gone with a large lot of ivory down to Boma. On G.['s] return intend to start up the river. Have been myself busy packing ivory in casks. Idiotic employment. Health good up to now.

Wrote to Simpson, to Gov. B., to Purd.,[3] to Hope,[4]

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[1]On his voyage from Europe presumably.

[2]Afterwards the notorious Sir Roger Casement, who was hanged for treason on August 3, 1916—the very date on which Conrad died eight years later. At this period Casement was in the employ of a commercial firm in the Congo. In 1898 he became British Consul in the Congo Free State.

[3]Probably Captain Purdy, an acquaintance of Conrad.

[4]Conrad's old friend, now living in Essex, Mr. G. F. W. Hope. In 1900 Conrad dedicated "Lord Jim" to Mr. and Mrs. Hope, "with grateful affection after many years of friendship."

to Capt. Froud,[1] and to Mar.[2]. Prominent characteristic of the social life here; people speaking ill of each other.[3]

Saturday, 28th June. Left Matadi with Mr. Harou[4] and a caravan of 31 men.[5] Parted with Casement in a very friendly manner. Mr. Gosse saw us off as far as the State station.

First halt, M'poso. 2 Danes in Company.[6]

Sund[ay], 29th. Ascent of Pataballa sufficiently fatiguing. Camped at 11 A.M. at Nsoke river. Mosquitos [always spelt thus].

Monday, 30th. To Congo da Lemba after passing black rocks. Long ascent. Harou giving up.[7] Bother. Camp bad. Water far. Dirty. At night Harou better.

Tuesday, 1st July. Left early in a heavy mist, marching towards Lufu river. Part route through forest on the sharp slope of a high mountain. Very long descent. Then market place from where short

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[1]The then Secretary of the London Ship-Master's Society. See "A Personal Record" (Concord Edition), p. 7. "Dear Captain Froud—it is impossible not to pay him the tribute of affectionate familiarity at this distance of years—had very sound views as to the advancement of knowledge and status for the whole body of the officers of the mercantile marine."

[2]Probably Marguerite Poradowska, his aunt.

[3]This was also a failing of the white men at the "Central Station" in "Heart of Darkness."

[4]Harou was an official of the Etat Indépendant du Congo Belge.

[5]Compare "Heart of Darkness," p. 70: "Next day I left that station at last with a caravan of 60 men for a 200-mile tramp." On 13 out of the 19 travelling days taken by Conrad on this overland journey he kept a record of the distance covered, and it totals 197½ miles.

[6]Curiously enough, the identity of these two Danes was discovered by Monsieur G. Jean-Aubry in Brussels early in 1925. Not knowing that they were mentioned in the diary, he omitted to take names or particulars.

[7]He seems to have been constantly unwell and one may compare "Heart of Darkness," p. 71: "I had a white companion too, not a bad chap, but rather too fleshy, and with the exasperating habit of fainting on the hot hillsides, miles away from the least bit of shade or water."

walk to the bridge (good) and camp. V. G. Bath. Clear river. Feel well. Harou all right. 1st chicken, 2 P. [M.] No sunshine to-day.

Wednesday, 2nd July. Started at 5:30 after a sleepless night. Country more open. Gently undulating hills. Road good, in perfect order. (District of Lukungu.) Great market at 9:30. Bought eggs and chickens. Feel not well to-day. Heavy cold in the head. Arrived at 11 at Banza Manteka. Camped on the market place. Not well enough to call on the missionary. Water scarce and bad. Camp[g] place dirty. 2 Danes still in Company.

Thursday, 3rd July. Left at 6 A. M. after a good night's rest. Crossed a low range of hills and entered a broad valley, or rather plain, with a break in the middle. Met an off[er] of the State inspecting. A few minutes afterwards saw at a camp[g] place the dead body of a Backongo. Shot?[1] Horrid smell.

Crossed a range of mountains, running N. W.—S. E. by a low pass. Another broad flat valley with a deep ravine through the centre. Clay and gravel. Another range parallel to the first mentioned, with a chain of low foothills running close to it. Between the two came to camp on the banks of the Luinzono river. Camp[g] place clean. River clear. Gov[t] Zanzibari[2] with register. Canoe. 2 Danes camp[g] on the other bank. Health good.

General tone of landscape gray-yellowish (dry grass)

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[1]Compare "Heart of Darkness," p. 71: "Once a white man in an unbuttoned uniform camping on the path . . . was looking after the upkeep of the road, he declared. Can't say I saw any road or any upkeep, unless the body of a middle-aged negro with a bullet-hole in the forehead, upon which I absolutely stumbled three miles further on, may be considered as a permanent improvement."

[2]Compare "Heart of Darkness," p. 71, in which he mentioned his meeting with a white man, who was accompanied by "an armed escort of lank Zanzibaris."

with reddish patches (soil) and clumps of dark green vegetation scattered sparsely about. Mostly in steep gorges between the high mountains or in ravines cutting the plain.[1]

Noticed Palma Christi—Oil Palm. Very straight, tall and thick trees in some places. Name not known to me. Villages quite invisible. Infer their existence from calbashes [*sic*] suspended to palm trees for the "Malafu." Good many caravans and travellers. No women, unless on the market place.

Bird notes charming. One especially a flute-like note. Another, kind of "boom" ressembling [*sic*] the very distant baying of a hound. Saw only pigeons and a few green parroquets. Very small and not many. No birds of prey seen by me.[2]

Up to 9 A. M. sky clouded and calm. Afterwards gentle breeze from the Nth generally and sky clearing. Nights damp and cool. White mists on the hills up about half way. Water effects very beautiful this morning. Mists generally raising before sky clears.

Distance 15 miles. General direction N. N. E.—S. S. W.

Friday, 4th July. Left camp at 6 A. M. after a very unpleasant night. Marching across a chain of hills and then in a maze of hills. At 8:15 opened out into an undulating plain. Took bearings of a break in the chain of mountains on the other side. Bearing N. N. E. Road passes through that. Sharp ascents up very steep hills not very high. The higher mountains recede sharply and show a low hilly country. At 9:30 market

[1]In "Heart of Darkness," p. 70, the country of the march is described as "a stamped-in network of paths spreading over the empty land, through long grass, through burnt grass, through thickets, down and up hilly ravines, up and down stony hills ablaze with heat."

[2]These natural history observations are curious, as Conrad practically never showed the slightest interest in such subjects.

place. At 10 passed R. Lukanga and at 10:30 camped on the Mpwe R.

To-day's march. Direction N. N. E.½.—N. Distce 13 miles.

Saw another dead body lying by the path in an attitude of meditative repose.[1]

In the evening three women, of whom one albino, passed our camp; horrid chalky white with pink blotches; red eyes; red hair; features very negroid and ugly. Mosquitos. At night when the moon rose heard shouts and drumming in distant villages.[2] Passed a bad night.

Saturday, 5th July. Left at 6:15. Morning cool, even cold, and very damp. Sky densely overcast. Gentle breeze from N. E. Road through a narrow plain up to R. Kwilu. Swift flowing and deep, 50 yds. wide. Passed in canoes. Afterds up and down very steep hills intersected by deep ravines. Main chain of heights running mostly N. W.—S. E. or W. and E. at times. Stopped at Manyamba. Campg place bad—in a hollow—water very indifferent. Tent set at 10:15. N. N. E. Distce 12 m.

To-day fell into a muddy puddle—beastly! The fault of the man that carried me. After campg went to a small stream, bathed and washed clothes. Getting jolly well sick of this fun.

To-morrow expect a long march to get to Nsona, 2 days from Manyanga. No sunshine to-day.

Sunday, 6th July. Started at 5:40. The route at first hilly, then, after a sharp descent, traversing a

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[1]The most "Conradesque" phrase in the diary.

[2]Compare "Heart of Darkness," p. 71: "Perhaps on some quiet night the tremor of far-off drums, sinking, swelling, a tremor vast, faint; a sound weird, appealing, suggestive, and wild—and perhaps with as profound a meaning as the sound of bells in a Christian country."

broad plain. At the end of it a large market place. At 10 sun came out. After leaving the market passed another plain, then, walking on the crest of a chain of hills, passed 2 villages and at 11 arrived at Nsona. Village invisible.

Direction about N. N. E. Distance 18 miles.

In this camp (Nsona) there is a good camp^{g} place. Shady, water far and not very good. This night no mosquitos owing to large fires, lit all round our tent. Afternoon very close: night clear and starry.

Monday, 7th July. Left at 6, after a good night's rest, on the road to Inkandu, which is some distance past Lukunga Govt. station. Route very accidented.[1] Succession of round steep hills. At times walking along the crest of a chain of hills. Just before Lukunga our carriers took a wide sweep to the southward till the station bore Nth. Walking through long grass for 1½ hours. Crossed a broad river about 100 feet wide and 4 deep.

After another ½ hour's walk through manioc plantations in good order rejoined our route to the E^{d} of the Lukunga sta^{on}, walking along an undulating plain towards the Inkandu market on a hill. Hot, thirsty and tired. At 11 arrived on the m^{ket} place. About 200 people. Business brisk. No water; no camp^{g} place. After remaining for one hour left in search of a resting place. Row with carriers. No water. At last about 1½ P. M. camped on an exposed hill side near a muddy creek. No shade. Tent on a slope. Sun heavy. Wretched.

Direction N. E. by N.—Distance 22 miles.

Night miserably cold. No sleep. Mosquitos.

Tuesday, 8th July. Left at 6 A. M. About ten

[1]An odd Gallicism. Conrad knew French long before he knew English; moreover, he was naturally talking much French at this time.

minutes from camp left main Gov^{t} path for the Manyanga track. Sky overcast. Rode up and down all the time, passing a couple of villages. The country presents a confused wilderness of hills, landslips on their sides showing red. Fine effect of red hill covered in places by dark green vegetation. ½ hour before beginning the descent got a glimpse of the Congo. Sky clouded.

To-day's march—3 h. General direction N. by E. Dist^{ce} 9½ miles.

Arrived at Manyanga at 9 A. M. Received most kindly by Messrs. Heyn and Jaeger. Most comfortable and pleasant halt.

Stayed here till the 25. Both have been sick. Most kindly care taken of us. Leave with sincere regrets.

Friday, the 25th July, 1890. Left Manyanga at 2½ P. M. with plenty of hammock carriers. H. lame and not in very good form. Myself ditto but not lame. Walked as far as Mafiela and camped—2 h.

Saturday, 26th. Left very early. Road ascending all the time. Passed villages. Country seems thickly inhabited. At 11 arrived at large market place. Left at noon and camped at 1 P. M.

General direction E ½ N-W ½ S. Sun visible at 8 A. M. Very hot. Distance 18 miles.

Sunday, 27th. Left at 8 A. M. Sent luggage carriers straight on to Luasi, and went ourselves round by the Mission of Sutili. Hospitable reception by Mrs. Comber. All the missio. absent. The looks of the whole establishment eminently civilized and very refreshing to see after the lots of tumbled down hovels in which the State & Company agents are content to live. Fine buildings. Position on a hill. Rather breezy.

Left at 3 P. M. At the first heavy ascent met Mr.

Davis, Miss., returning from a preaching trip. Rev. Bentley away in the south with his wife. This being off the road, no section given.[1]

Distance traversed about 15 miles. Gen. direction E. N. E.

At Luasi we get on again on to the Gov^{t} road.

Camped at 4½ P. M. with Mr. Heche in company. To-day no sunshine. Wind remarkably cold. Gloomy day.

Monday, 28th. Left camp at 6:30 after breakfasting with Heche. Road at first hilly. Then walking along the ridges of hill chains with valleys on both sides. The country more open and there is much more trees[2] growing in large clumps in the ravines.

Passed Nzungi and camped, 11, on the right bank of the Ngoma, a rapid little river with rocky bed. Village on a hill to the right.

General direction E. N. E.—Distance 14 miles.

No sunshine. Gloomy cold day. Squalls.

Tuesday, 29th. Left camp at 7, after a good night's rest. Continuous ascent; rather easy at first. Crossed wooded ravines and the river Lunzadi by a very decent bridge. At 9 met Mr. Louette escorting a sick agent of the comp^{y} back to Matadi. Looking very well. Bad news from up the river. All the steamers disabled—one wrecked.[3] Country wooded. At 10:30 camped at Inkissi.

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[1]Sections of the day's marches, with numerous names on them, were given under the following dates: July 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 25th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, August 1st.

[2]One of the few un-English phrases in the diary. By 1890 Conrad had been a British subject for six years, but he never learnt the language until he was grown up.

[3]Compare "Heart of Darkness," p. 72: "One of them [the white men at the Central Station] . . . informed me with great volubility and many digressions . . . that my steamer was at the bottom of the river."

General direction E. N. E.—Dist^ce 15 miles.

Sun visible at 6:30. Very warm day.

Inkissi River very rapid; is about 100 yards broad. Passage in canoes. Banks wooded very densely, and valley of the river rather deep, but very narrow.

To-day did not set the tent, but put up in Gov^t shimbek. Zanzibari[1] in charge—very obliging. Met ripe pineapple for the first time. On the road to-day passed a skeleton tied up to a post. Also white man's grave—no name—heap of stones in the form of a cross. Health good now.

Wednesday, 30th. Left at 6 A. M. intending to camp at Kinfumu. Two hours sharp walk brought me to Nsona na Nsefe. Market. ½ hour after Harou arrived very ill with billious [*sic*] attack and fever. Laid him down in Gov^t shimbek.

Dose of ipec^a. Vomiting bile in enormous quantities. At 11 gave him 1 gramme of quinine and lots of hot tea. Hot fit ending in heavy perspiration. At 2 P. M. put him in hammock and started for Kinfumu. Row with carriers all the way.[2] Harou suffering much through the jerks of the hammock. Camped at a small stream. At 4 Harou better; fever gone.

General direction N. E. by E. ½ E. Distance 13 miles.

Up till noon sky clouded and strong N. W. wind very chilling. From 1 P. M. to 4 P. M. sky clear and a very hot day. Expect lots of bother with carriers to-morrow. Had them all called and made a speech,

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[1]See note, p. 163.

[2]Compare "Heart of Darkness," p. 71: "Then he [the white man with him] got fever, and had to be carried in a hammock slung under a pole. As he weighed sixteen stone I had no end of rows with the carriers."

which they did not understand.[1] They promise good behaviour.

Thursday, 31st. Left at 6. Sent Harou ahead, and followed in ½ an hour.[2]

Road presents several sharp ascents, and a few others easier but rather long. Notice in places sandy surface soil instead of hard clay as heretofore; think however that the layer of sand is not very thick and that the clay would be found under it. Great difficulty in carrying Harou. Too heavy—bother![3] Made two long halts to rest the carriers. Country wooded in valleys and on many of the ridges.

At 2:30 P. M. reached Luila at last, and camped on right bank. Breeze from S. W.

General direction of march about N. E. ½ E. Distance, est[d] 16 miles.

Congo very narrow and rapid. Kinzilu rushing in. A short distance up from the mouth, fine waterfall. Sun rose red. From 9 A. M. infernally hot day. Harou very little better. Self rather seedy. Bathed. Luila about 60 feet wide. Shallow.

Friday, 1st of August, 1890. Left at 6:30 A. M. after a very indifferently passed night. Cold, heavy mists. Road in long ascents and sharp dips all the way to Mfumu Mbé. After leaving there, a long and painful climb up a very steep hill; then a long descent to Mfumu Kono, where a long halt was made. Left at 12:30 P. M. towards Nselemba. Many ascents. The aspect of the country entirely changed. Wooded hills

[1]Compare "Heart of Darkness," p. 71: ". . . one evening, I made a speech in English with gestures, not one of which was lost to the sixty pairs of eyes before me."

[2]Compare "Heart of Darkness," pp. 71–2: ". . . the next morning I started the hammock off in front all right."

[3]Compare "Heart of Darkness," p. 71: ". . . he [the white man with him] weighed sixteen stone. . . ."

with openings. Path almost all the afternoon thro' a forest of light trees with dense undergrowth.

After a halt on a wooded hillside, reached Nselemba at 4:10 P. M. Put up at Gov^{t} shanty. Row between the carriers and a man, stating himself in Gov^{t} employ, about a mat. Blows with sticks raining hard. Stopped it.

Chief came with a youth about 13 suffering from gun-shot wound in the head. Bullet entered about an inch above the right eyebrow, and came out a little inside the roots of the hair, fairly in the middle of the brow in a line with the bridge of the nose. Bone not damaged apparently. Gave him a little glycerine to put on the wound made by the bullet on coming out.

Harou not very well. Mosquitos—frogs—beastly! Glad to see the end of this stupid tramp. Feel rather seedy. Sun rose red. Very hot day. Wind Sth.

General direction of march N. E. by N. Distance about 17 miles.[1]

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[1]The journey from Matadi to this point by Stanley Pool took nineteen travelling days. Compare "Heart of Darkness," p. 72: "On the fifteenth day I came in sight of the big river [Congo] again and hobbled into the Central Station."

THE END

LAUGHING ANNE

LAUGHING ANNE

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF PERSONAGES IN THE PLAY

DAVIDSON: About 35. Plump, round face, little fair moustache. Fair hair parted on the side. Very quiet manner and voice, with a sort of habitual half-smile. Is dressed in the usual tropical white drill suit, tunic and trousers. From second button of tunic to the left side pocket a gold watch-chain across his breast. White shoes and white tropical helmet. As general definition, a kindly "delicate soul in a comfortable envelope."

HOLLIS: 40. Dark, clean-shaven, close-cropped. Same kind of clothes as Davidson.

[These two men are well groomed; their white clothes spotlessly got up.]

BAMTZ: Lanky, long, loose, black beard streaked with grey over his breast. Dressed in white trousers with belt. Grey shirt. No collar. Linen jacket worn open. All this dingy. Pair of old white shoes. Lounging, casual, lazy bearing. Drawling voice. Propensity to cringe.

FECTOR: Short. A shaven, sour, little red face. Nervous, impudent bearing. Dress: white trousers and a very old shooting jacket (which he had brought with him years ago from home). Shabby brown shoes.

NAKHODA: Smooth, round, yellow face with thickish dark lips and thin drooping moustache—a few hairs only on face. Dress: a tunic like Davidson's, only instead of being white it must be made of very thin blue flannel. Instead of trousers, a Malay sarong of common check pattern (or any other for that matter). On head a small round skull-cap. On his bare brown feet a pair of patent-leather slippers. Jaunty, fatuous bearing.

[The above three men have the common characteristic of slight jumpiness.]

MAN WITHOUT HANDS: Need not be actually tall and stout but must give the impression of a *big* man. Large face, with rather long black hair brushed up from a high forehead. Black eyes. Moves ponderously. Dress: white trousers cut very broad at hip, very narrow at ankle, held up at waist by a faded sash. He has no shirt, but only a thin singlet, over which he wears open a roomy linen jacket with side pockets. White shoes. Overbearing manner. Deep voice.

ANNE: In First Act. A faded pink princess robe with a train and some ragged white lace trimming at neck and sleeves. (Last remnant of her old outfit.) Hair untidy. Old white satin shoes.

In Second Act. A piece of chintz made up like a chemise dress with straps over shoulders. Head tied in a red handkerchief and hair loose down her back. Straw slippers on bare feet. Necklace of yellow beads.

TONY: Dingy white blouse and short knickers, bare legs and feet. Sunburnt. Head of tight chestnut curls.

ACT I

SCENE represents back verandah of Macao Hotel, seen from the interor. At the back the columns of the verandah with creepers and view of the sky, between the supports of the verandah there is a balustrade; end-on to the audience two tables, of which one is covered with a white cloth. Remnants of a meal and a couple of glasses. Abreast of those tables and close to the balustrade, right and left, there are invisible stairs leading down to the ground. Right and left towards the proscenium two whitewashed walls, of which the left has got a half-glazed door and the right just a common doorway nearly flush with the wall.

DAVIDSON *and* HOLLIS *sitting at table.* DAVIDSON'S *helmet and* HOLLIS'S *white cap on the floor. From time to time a slight breath of air stirs the creepers on the column. The light should be suggestive of bright sunshine outside.*

HOLLIS. Here we have been yarning of old times for an hour or so in this damned Macao Hotel and I never asked you why you frequent such a place.

DAVIDSON. I don't frequent it. Never been here before in my life, but my ship is in dry dock. There is no cooking on board a ship in dry dock, and as I didn't want to go back to town I thought I would try to get a bite here. It's a low place but I don't suppose they put poison in one's dishes because one's a stranger.

HOLLIS [*dry tone*]. No. Many a stranger has been drugged here though, and rooked of all his cash.

Every shady loafer, ruffian and scallywag in the Islands finds his way to this place sooner or later. Don't you remember how we used to warn young fellows against being enticed in here? I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw you at the door. I wouldn't have liked to be seen coming in here. Not by myself. With you it's another matter.

DAVIDSON [*faint smile*]. Why?

HOLLIS [*jocular*]. Because no breath of suspicion ever rested on you. [*Laughs a little.*] My dear fellow, don't you remember how we used to call you "good Davidson," "good Davy." To your own face, too.

DAVIDSON [*placid*]. There was a lot of chaff flying about amongst our lot.

HOLLIS [*reminiscent*]. Wild lot, too, we were. But you were the quietest.

DAVIDSON. Old times, now . . . [*Sighs.*]

HOLLIS [*pursuing his idea. With a sort of eagerness, elbows on table*]. Do you remember that clever naturalist chap that now and then chummed with us? He said of you once that he had never seen such a kind soul in such a comfortable envelope. Ha! Ha! Ha! Comfortable envelope! That was good.

DAVIDSON [*wipes his forehead with his handkerchief*]. Phew! It's hot! He had his own style of joking. He is a great scientific man at home now. I have got his famous book on board my ship. Phew! The heat!

HOLLIS. We are more likely to get a little air from the sea at the back here than in the front of the house. And anyhow I wouldn't like to be seen in public here, though, of course, with you it wouldn't matter so much.

DAVIDSON [*placid smile*]. Am I so very respectable?

HOLLIS. No, no. I don't mean that, I mean just good. Exactly as in the old days . . . You look it, you know.

DAVIDSON [*mock resignation*]. I can't help my looks.

HOLLIS. No, you can't. Any more than the rest of us could help being wild and looking it too.

DAVIDSON [*placid smile*]. Lively, lively. Good fellows tho'.

HOLLIS. Where are they all? Scattered to the four winds of heaven.

DAVIDSON [*leaning on his elbow*]. Aye. Not enough ballast, most of them. And Harry was the most flighty of the lot. You remember Harry the Pearler?

HOLLIS. Why! Yes. The fellow with a girl of his own. He brought her out here from Western Australia or somewhere that way. She was a good sort too. But those are old times and no mistake. I wonder what became of her.

DAVIDSON [*wiping brow*]. Phew! The heat! I fancy Harry dropped her. One used to hear of Laughing Anne turning up here and there amongst the Islands. The name stuck to her.

HOLLIS [*surprised*]. You heard it lately?

DAVIDSON. Oh, dear no! She vanished years ago; and Harry the Pearler is dead, and I suppose there is nobody to remember him now but you and I. And yet we two are not so very old.

HOLLIS. Years in the tropics count double, my boy. We have kept wonderfully. But the most wonderful thing is that you and I should come together in this place which is notoriously the rendezvous of all sorts of bad characters for a thousand miles round.

DAVIDSON. I tell you I came here to get something to eat, while waiting for my ship to come out of dock. [*Above the level of the floor to the left of* HOLLIS'S *chair appears the head of* FECTOR *in an old grey felt hat.*]

HOLLIS. Same old ship, I suppose?

DAVIDSON. Oh, yes . . . Ten or twelve years now. Nice little ship. I've got very fond of her.

HOLLIS [*dreamily*]. Yes. Same old Islands, same old reefs, same old worries, same old trade.

DAVIDSON [*placid*]. Pretty well. Only I don't worry now. I can find my way about this part of the world with my eyes shut. However, this trip will be out of the common. It is going to be a dollar-collecting trip amongst other things. I expect I will have sixty thousand of them before I am done . . . You know, packed in wooden cases.

HOLLIS [*moves his chair a bit and* FECTOR'S *head vanishes instantly*]. I wouldn't talk loudly about it in a place like this.

DAVIDSON. Why? You seem as bad as my wife. She is quite nervous about the danger. [*Laughs placidly.*] I told her that there are no pirates nowadays in the Archipelago, except in boys' books.

HOLLIS. Well, no. All the same in a den like this I wouldn't . . .

DAVIDSON. What's the matter? Sixty thousand dollars in cases is not a job for a pickpocket, is it? I am having one of the ship's store-rooms fitted for the purpose of putting those cases in. [*While* DAVIDSON *is speaking the half-glazed door comes open a little way and* FECTOR *puts his head through. He withdraws it at*

once but leaves the door ajar. The faint clicking of billiard balls is heard periodically.]

HOLLIS [*grimly*]. The crowd that drinks here wouldn't be up to piracy. Not they. Regular shore-sweepings they are. I noticed one or two notorious characters on the front verandah. That fellow Fector who calls himself a journalist, was one.

DAVIDSON [*surprised*]. A journalist!

HOLLIS [*scornful*]. He calls himself a journalist as some receivers of stolen goods call themselves marine dealers. He has been kicked and horsewhipped in every place from Aden to Shanghai for a swindler and blackmailer . . . And I am hanged if I didn't catch sight in the bar of a loafer I thought was dead long ago. Surely you would have heard of Bamtz.

DAVIDSON [*doubtful*]. Didn't he have a great beard?

HOLLIS. Horrid. That's how I recognized him. Same old beard. There was never such a beard seen from here to Polynesia, where you can sell a beard for hard cash any day. But Bamtz used his beard for prestige—you know. There was a tale going of him wheedling trading privileges once from the late Sultan of Sulu on the strength of his beard. Damn it all! One can understand a fellow living by cadging and small swindles in towns in large communities of people, but Bamtz has been doing that trick for years in the wilderness. Cadging for his living on the edge of the virgin forest! Of course he isn't the sort that would hurt a fly. He would be afraid to tackle a fly. [*Confused noise of voices through the door which is ajar.*]

HOLLIS [*looks over his shoulder, gets up, shuts the door. Comes back to his seat*]. Didn't notice that door wasn't shut. . . . Bamtz does look like a pirate, I must

say, but he calls himself an accountant, book-keeper, or something of that sort. [*Left door opens and* FECTOR *lounges in, hands in pockets, jaunty, advances to table.*] Now, what do you want here?

FECTOR [*assumed dignity*]. This is a public place.

HOLLIS. You can't ferret out anything here you could sell.

FECTOR. What do you take me for?

HOLLIS. Eavesdropper, blackmailer, forger—take your choice.

FECTOR [*reeling a little as if drunk*]. Oh, yes, yes. I am used to hear that sort of thing. Every man with a mission is insulted. My mission always was to track out abuses and fight them. And I won't be driven out. This is the coolest place in the blamed den and I am going to sit here. [*Reels slightly to the other table, sits down, throws his arms on the table and rests his head on them.*]

HOLLIS [*low tone*]. This is impossible. . . . Shall we go? [*Gets up.*]

DAVIDSON [*who has been wiping his forehead, getting matches, cigar, lighting it and taking puffs, pulls out handkerchief, wipes his forehead*]. It's too frightfully hot yet. I think I will sit here for another hour before I go to the dock. [*Slight snore from* FECTOR.] I don't mind him.

HOLLIS [*with a look at* FECTOR. *Tone of disgust*]. I didn't know he drank too. I can't stand that beast. . . . [*Persuasive.*] We could drive to town together.

DAVIDSON. I can't. I must walk over to the ship presently to see about that store-room for the dollars.

I expect to have forty or more cases on my return trip. [*He gets up to shake hands.*]

HOLLIS [*affectionate*]. Well, good luck to you, Davidson. We may not come across each other again very soon. It was good to have a yarn with you about old times. [*Ready to go.*]

DAVIDSON [*cordial*]. Yes. . . . I say! Won't you go and see my wife? She would know your name in a moment.

HOLLIS [*moving towards the stairs right. Jocular*]. Do you mean to say that you talk to your wife of old times? [*Moves off laughing.*]

DAVIDSON [*calls out after* HOLLIS *placidly*]. She is all right.

[*Exit* HOLLIS. FECTOR *who had raised his head slightly while the others were taking leave of each other drops it on his arms at once.* DAVIDSON *sits down heavily, giving a glance at* FECTOR *and goes on smoking. After a pause* FECTOR *raises himself, gets up, sways very slightly.*]

FECTOR [*thickly*]. Captain Davidson, I believe. [DAVIDSON *nods.*] Of the steamship *Sissie.* [DAVIDSON *hardly nods.*] One of the most respected shipmasters in port. Allow me to ask . . .

DAVIDSON [*placid.*] No use. I won't give you a drink. You have had enough already.

FECTOR [*pulls out a small pad and pencil from his pocket*]. I only wanted to ask your opinion of this new currency scheme.

DAVIDSON [*mildly*]. Oh, get out.

FECTOR [*change of bearing and venomous tone*]. That's what I am going to do. I am going out. Heat or no heat. . . . Where the devil's my hat? [*Exit into the billiard-room, slams door behind him, leaving* DAVIDSON *astonished. But very soon* DAVIDSON *wipes his brow again, breeze rustles the creepers,* DAVIDSON *takes a deep breath.*]

DAVIDSON. That's better. [*Dozes lightly, cigar drops out of his fingers, the door on right opens, and* ANNE *puts her head out, perceives a man there, draws her head in, then puts it out again, looks hard at* DAVIDSON, *then comes out, shuts the door after her and approaches him step by step. Stops, peers, throws her arms up, claps her hands in extreme wonder.*]

ANNE. My God! It's Davy! [*Somewhat shrill.*]

DAVIDSON [*wakes up with a start, jumps up amazed*]. What, what's this?

ANNE [*advances, arms extended, seizes him by the shoulders*]. Why, you have hardly changed at all. The same good Davy. [*Characteristic clear laugh, a little wild.*]

DAVIDSON [*starts in all his limbs. Awed tone of voice*]. You—you are Laughing Anne!

ANNE [*approaching her face to his a little*]. All that's left of her, Davy . . . all that's left of her. [*Her hands slip off* DAVIDSON'S *shoulders, head droops. Suddenly she fumbles in pocket for rag of handkerchief, puts it to her eyes, choked voice.*] It's years since I heard myself called by that name. [*Drops hands again.*]

DAVIDSON [*looking all round, ceiling, floor, walls, still awe-struck*]. Where on earth did you come from?

ANNE. From that room.

DAVIDSON [*dazed*]. Room? Where? What room?

ANNE [*short peal of laughter*]. Through that door—there.

DAVIDSON. A door? Can't be! [*Recovering himself.*] Oh, that door! I thought I was dreaming.

ANNE. No dream, Davy! It's I in the flesh. The very Laughing Anne . . . [*Break in voice. Desolate.*] Oh, Davy! Harry ought not to have cast me off. It's he who led me astray.

DAVIDSON [*sympathetic. Grave face*]. He died some years ago. Perhaps you heard?

ANNE [*nods slightly*]. Yes, I heard. [*They look at each other with a sort of desolation, meantime the door on the right opens and a small boy of about six or seven runs out and catches hold of* ANNE'S *skirt.*]

DAVIDSON [*starts back*]. What's this?

ANNE [*laugh*]. Why! Don't you know a small boy when you see him, Davy? [*Tone of anguish.*] That's my Tony.

DAVIDSON [*very low, after looking at the child*]. Harry's?

ANNE [*also very low*]. No. Another's. What would you have? What was I to do? [*Changed tone to the child.*] Say how do you do to the good gentleman.

BOY [*extending grimy paw to* DAVIDSON. *Merrily and quite unabashed*]. Bonjour.

DAVIDSON. Eh? [*Lets go of boy's hand suddenly and looks distracted*].

ANNE. Run away now. That's a good boy. [*Exit child.*]

DAVIDSON. Can't he speak English?

ANNE. Oh, yes, he is picking it up. Some dear old French people in Saigon were taking care of him for me. I picked up with the skipper of a German ship, and was going with him up and down the China Sea. Then at the end of two years or so he tells me "This is all over, mein taubchen. I must go home and marry the girl I am engaged to." He didn't look very happy about it, so I laughed and went ashore. We parted friends, but oh, Davy! it was no laughing matter for me. I had to take the boy away from those French people who were going back to France; and there I was. I was tired of life and down on my luck, I can tell you, when a fellow called Bamtz turned up. I suppose even such as he want company.

DAVIDSON [*making a movement of dismay*]. You—are—with Bamtz? [*Shocked.*]

ANNE [*nods*]. Yes, I know. But it was for the kid. How could I have kept him with me if I had to knock about in towns? And this Bamtz is not a brute. He seems real fond of him. . . . I suppose I ought to thank God for that.

DAVIDSON [*exclaims with feeling*]. Thank God for Bamtz! [*Drop in voice.*] My poor Anne.

ANNE [*with a reckless wave of her arm*]. For the boy! . . . So I gave him the few poor little trinkets I had to sell and he took me away to a little native place three hundred miles from here where no white man ever comes. The Rajah there has given us a big hut to live in. There is nothing but forests all round, Davy, but like this the boy needn't ever know that his mother was a painted woman.

DAVIDSON [*anxious tone*]. But what brought you here?

ANNE. We got a passage in a native boat. Bamtz thinks he could manage to trade enough to keep body and soul together—the three of us, out there—in the forest—out of men's sight, if he could only get a ship to call for produce now and then. Twice a year would do. Oh, Davy, you have a ship. You can do what you like; God has put you in my way. Say yes, Davy, just twice a year and that will be enough for us to live on. Shall I fetch him out to you now so that he hears it from your own mouth. Yes? . . . [*Runs lightly to the door of the billiard-room, puts her head in. Clicking of billiard-balls heard.*]

DAVIDSON [*irresolute*]. Wait. [BAMTZ *comes through the door shutting it behind him. Slight check at sight of* DAVIDSON, *one hand in his pocket.* ANNE *drags at his other arm.*]

ANNE. Come along. Captain Davidson will be our friend.

BAMTZ [*jerks arm away, puts other hand in pocket. Weak face, long streaked beard, seems as if unscrewed at the waist, careless lounging attitudes which conceal his propensity to cringe. Advances towards* DAVIDSON, *who is looking at him fixedly*]. Good morning, Captain.

DAVIDSON [*looking at him keenly, but in a placid voice*]. She tells me that you think you have some prospects of trade over there where you live.

BAMTZ [*drawling*]. Prospects . . . Yaas. I know how to manage the natives and there's a little capital—if you would only promise to call for produce.

DAVIDSON. You know you will have to behave decently.

ANNE. He has been always kind, only . . . [*Makes a movement with her hand.*]

BAMTZ [*looking in the air and as if speaking to himself. Drawling*]. A pinch of dollars in hand—a cheap necklace—a set of bangles—a brooch or two . . . Here's . . . [*jerks head at* ANNE] capital.

DAVIDSON [*with a sort of grim placidity*]. I see. [*Reflects.*] I could probably arrange a call, only . . .

ANNE [*clasping her hands*]. Say yes, Davy. Think of that poor kid.

BAMTZ [*with a little more interest in his voice, to* DAVIDSON]. See him, Captain? Cute little customer. [*Returns to listless attitude.*]

DAVIDSON. Suppose you leave me with her for a moment. [BAMTZ *makes a move at once.*] You had better keep clear now of that billiard-room.

BAMTZ [*lounging off, hands in pockets*]. Yaas, a low lot in there. I never cared for them, but sometimes one must . . . [*Lounges off into bedroom.*]

DAVIDSON [*placidly anxious*]. Would you trust him? Do you think you could stick it out?

ANNE [*moves lightly to billiard-room door and turns the key saying*]. A lot of these beasts there. Eavesdropping too. We have been here four days. . . . [*With ardour.*] No more paint and dyes for me, Davy, if you will do what he asks you to do. Stick it out? Can't I! You know I have always stuck to my men through thick and thin, till they had enough of me. And now look at what's left of me. But inside I am what I always was. I have acted on the square to them, one after another. I was a pal worth having.

But men do get tired of one. They don't understand women. [*Characteristic short peal of laughter.*]

DAVIDSON [*placidly anxious*]. Don't, Anne.

ANNE [*puts handkerchief to her eyes and sobs, while the door of the billiard-room is tried from outside and then shaken a bit*]. Harry is the only man I ever loved. He ought not to have cast me off.

DAVIDSON [*quiet feeling*]. Well, I will be your friend. Tell Bamtz to expect me in a month's time. Keep him clear of that crowd and get away from here as quick as ever you can.

ANNE. We can leave to-night in a native boat. Trust me. [*Seizing his hands and shaking them.*] It's for the kid, Davy. It's for the kid. [*Moves towards bedroom. At door turns round to say*]: Isn't he a bright little chap?

[DAVIDSON *wipes his forehead with pocket handkerchief. Looks at watch. While he is doing these things the door of the billiard-room is shaken again. He gives it a mere glance, puts his watch in his pocket. Picks his hat from the floor and goes downstairs right. Almost directly after,* FECTOR'S *head appears up the stairs left and seeing there is no one there he strides straight to the billiard-room door, turns the key.*]

FECTOR. I wonder who locked that door. [*Reflects.*] Would it be Bamtz. Hullo! Bamtz! You there? [*Waits.*] I got a dollar for you. [*Door of the bedroom comes ajar and voice of* BAMTZ *is heard.*]

BAMTZ. Let me go and see. [*Comes out and at once assumes his lounging, casual, hesitating bearing.*] What's that you said?

FECTOR [*dollar in hand*]. Your winnings, I believe.

BAMTZ [*looking into the air*]. Oh, yaas! [*Extends open palm.*]

FECTOR [*putting dollar in his pocket*]. You damned fraud, you knew you had no winnings . . . I only want to talk to you.

BAMTZ [*concealing his discomfiture and sidling away*]. I'm not interested—ah—in your talk.

FECTOR. You will jolly well have to be. Why did you lock that door?

BAMTZ [*alarmed*]. I didn't. I swear I didn't.

FECTOR. You have been plotting something in there with that woman you have got in tow. You haven't the right to lock any door in this house. It's offensive. This is a public place. Don't you want to keep friendly with the crowd?

BAMTZ [*desperate*]. I don't want to be friends with any of you. I am done with you. Yaas. [*Impressively.*] I had a business interview here with Captain Davidson and I am glad the door was locked—whoever locked it.

FECTOR. Captain Davidson?

BAMTZ [*superior*]. Yaas.

FECTOR. Were you trying to cadge something out of him? Well, I'm hanged! . . . No! Don't go . . . Stop right here.

BAMTZ [*reluctant*]. Don't worry me. I'll have none of your tricks. I'm going to be a merchant—on the square.

FECTOR. Oh, you liar!

BAMTZ. Fact. Deal in island produce. Been discussing freights with Captain Davidson. That's the sort of man I am. He's going to call for the first lot in about a month's time.

FECTOR [*shout of astonishment*]. No! [BAMTZ *shuffling away towards the door puts his hand on the handle.*] Here! Don't go!

BAMTZ. I will have no truck with you. [*Exit.*]

FECTOR [*stands for a moment, chin in hand, obvious hesitation, then dashes at billiard-room door, puts his head in, withdraws it with exclamation*]. Gone. [*Runs to balustrade and shouts into garden*]: Hey, hey! . . . Yes, both of you. Come up here a moment. [*He walks front of stage and stands biting his fingers nervously, while up the stairs to left big bulk of* MAN WITHOUT HANDS *rises up, followed by the* NAKHODA. *They stand behind* FECTOR, M. W. H. *frowning, with his stumps rammed deep into the side pockets of jacket;* NAKHODA *with a sort of fatuous smile.*]

M. W. H. [*deep voice*]. Well! [*Waits.*] What's this infernal joke?

FECTOR [*walking up and down across the stage in agony of indecision*]. There's a damned big job . . . as big as a mountain.

M. W. H. [*angry bellow*]. Out with it, then.

FECTOR [*at a distance. Wringing his hands*]. I don't know whether I ought to trust you fellows. [*Stands still suddenly.*]

M. W. H. [*advancing ponderously at* FECTOR, *who quails, but also seems fascinated*]. You wouldn't dare to insult me if it hadn't been for my misfortune. [*Turns away towards front of stage raising his stumps and*

shaking them before him. Looking up to heaven with fury.] If I had my way, you up there would be damned too. Then you would know how I feel.

FECTOR. Don't blaspheme.

M. W. H. [*turns on him*]. If I could kill people with my eyes you wouldn't dare speak to me like this.

FECTOR. You manage to make me feel deadly sick with your beastly eyes. [*Quails but holds his ground.*]

M. W. H. [*deep voice*]. Out with your story—if you have one.

FECTOR [*passing him quickly to move to other side of the stage*]. I suppose I must. Listen. [M. W. H. *spins round and* NAKHODA, *who persistently keeps at his elbow, preserves his fatuous air.*] There will be in a month's time a ship, a little trading ship, travelling about the Java Sea with something like 80,000 dollars aboard of her.

M. W. H. [*contemptuous*]. Well, what of it? What's the good of it to anybody. There must be lots of ships with dollars—and gold in them too—afloat on the seas at this very moment.

FECTOR. Yes, but I know where that particular ship will be next month—the exact spot. A lonely spot. Inhabited by an ass called Bamtz.

M. W. H. [*walking up and down and gesticulating with his stumps*]. Bamtz! Bamtz! I know him inside out. A mere rag—dirty rag. We could do what we like with him.

NAKHODA. He's sailing with me to-night. I am giving him a passage to his home.

FECTOR [*strikes in*]. Which is the very spot.

M. W. H. Then, we must ask him for hospitality. [*Laughs.*] He is not a man that ever refuses anything to anybody. Man! He's a worm.

FECTOR. Eighty thousand dollars!

NAKHODA. That's twenty thousand each. Four of us. Including Bamtz.

M. W. H. You can't know how elated a poor cripple feels at the prospect of a little activity. [*Ferocious.*] You will have to go through with it now. I will keep your livers sweet for you. [*To* NAKHODA.] Isn't it time to get your passengers on board?

NAKHODA. Yes, we sail early to-night. I promised to come for them.

FECTOR. Well, here we are then. You *have* come for them. Go and get them out. [*While* NAKHODA *goes to knock at the door on right* FECTOR *and* M. W. H. *withdraw to left side and watch the performance. Dusk falls.* NAKHODA *knocks again.*]

NAKHODA [*speaking at the door*]. Time to go on board. [*The door opens and a voice from within says*]: We have been waiting for you [*and* BAMTZ *comes out first carrying a very dilapidated valise in his hand and wearing a ragged overcoat over his white clothes. Behind him* ANNE *in very shabby tussore long coat over the pink gown. She carries a bundle tied up in a check cloth and a native basket, and with the other hand leads* TONY. *They make for the stairs.* NAKHODA *watches them*].

M. W. H. [*quiet voice across the verandah*]. Bamtz.

BAMTZ [*starts, and is so upset that he drops the valise on the floor and leans his back against the wall*]. What do you want?

M. W. H. [*speaking across the verandah*]. I am going to resume my activities and as I happen to need your help your fortune is as good as made.

BAMTZ. For God's sake do leave me alone. I am no good for anything. I have no nerve . . . Never had any.

M. W. H. [*moving across ponderously. Soft voice*]. What *is* the matter? Can't you entertain a few friends in your new home for a few days?

BAMTZ. Keep off me. Go away. Leave me alone. I won't have it.

M. W. H. [*soft*]. Won't you? Not even for a stake of about 20,000 dollars or so?

BAMTZ. I know you of old. You were then worse than the devil himself.

M. W. H. [*taking his stumps out of his pocket and putting them close to* BAMTZ'S *face*]. See this? Well, since my misfortune I am ten times worse than before. Now then, go ahead. Move on. March. [*Terrible voice.*] Crawl, you worm. [TONY *begins to cry.* M. W. H. *seems to take notice of* ANNE *for the first time.*] Why! He's a family man. That's excellent.

ANNE [*to the whimpering child*]. Don't be frightened, Tony. He will do you no harm. [BAMTZ *has gone downstairs,* NAKHODA *has followed him and* M. W. H. *remains standing at head of stairs looking towards* ANNE.]

M. W. H. You have a nice voice. I am sure you will make us comfortable. [*Half jeering.*] In your retired home.

ANNE [*passionately*]. Ah, if he were only half a man! . . . Don't cry, Tony. It's all right.

M. W. H. Yes, if he were. I fancy you must be the better man of the two. Never mind. It suits me first rate. You'll be friends with me. A helpless, miserable cripple longing for a companion to take care of him . . . always. [*Puts his arm over* ANNE'S *shoulder and with the stump against her cheek turns her face round and looks into it.*] Frightened? No need to be. I am a harmless cripple. [*Takes arm off and gives her a push towards the stairs. As* ANNE, TONY, FECTOR *and* M. W. H. *move off in single file,* CURTAIN *falls.*]

ACT II: Scene 1

INTERIOR of a hut with walls of mats, unequally divided by a partition of rough mats. Wooden posts visible in corners. The biggest portion has an open doorway in wall at back and open doorway in dividing partition. Smaller part containing one keg, and bed-place made of wooden cases. Nightlight burning on the floor. Larger part contains oblong table in middle, four wooden chairs round it. On the table glasses, bottle, red earthenware jug, two candles. Fector, Nakhoda, Bamtz, *and* M. W. H. *sitting on chairs playing cards.* Anne *holding* M. W. H.'s *cards for him stands by his chair. The men are dressed as before.* Anne *in loose chintz wrapper and straw slippers on bare feet. Her head tied up Malay fashion in red handkerchief, with mass of loose hair hanging behind. Long necklace of amber beads hangs on her uncovered neck.*

M. W. H. Play the king of hearts.

Tony [*in cot in other room. Plaintive voice*]. Mama.

Anne [*throwing the cards down*]. Coming, dear. [*Passes into the other room. Seen bending over cot.* M. W. H., Fector, Nakhoda, Bamtz, *throw down cards.*]

M. W. H. The time is drawing near. Now, listen to me once more. [*Four heads in a bunch. Loud whispering, during which, without any noise,* Davidson *appears in the outer doorway, white cap, white clothes. Stands gazing till* Bamtz *looking up sees him and rises abruptly from his chair.*]

BAMTZ [*staring. Loud*]. Captain Davidson. [*In other room* ANNE *seen turning her head.*]

DAVIDSON [*grim but placid*]. I haven't startled you, have I?

ANNE [*in bedroom doorway*]. Davy! Heaven itself sends you here to-night.

BAMTZ [*dropping back into his chair. Loud voice*]. Come in, Captain. [*Falters.*] Come in.

ANNE [*extended arms towards* DAVIDSON]. My Tony's so bad. [*Seizes* DAVIDSON *by arm and tugs at it.*] Come along and see him. [M. W. H. *leans back in chair.* FECTOR *sits sideways, arm thrown over back of his chair.* NAKHODA *back to audience.* BAMTZ, *with appearance of extreme nervousness, looks up at* ANNE *and* DAVIDSON *as they pass by.*]

BAMTZ. Poor little beggar.

DAVIDSON [*leaning over cot.*] We want a better light here.

ANNE. Yes, Davy. [*Goes into big room, snatches up candle.*]

FECTOR [*scandalized*]. Hullo! Hullo!

M. W. H. Let her have it. [*Meantime* ANNE *passes in and with* DAVIDSON *examines child by light of candle.*]

DAVIDSON. He is a little hot. Don't you worry. Could you boil a little water for a drink?

ANNE. I have nothing here.

DAVIDSON [*very loud*]. I will just go on board and bring you a spirit kettle and some medicine that will do him good. [*Changed tone with movement of head towards the other room.*] What's this, Anne?

ANNE [*makes a gesture of raising hands and drops them*]. They would come.

DAVIDSON [*very loud*]. There is no danger whatever. [*Low voice.*] I am afraid this bodes no good to you, my poor girl. What do you think they are up to?

ANNE [*speaking very quickly*]. They are after the dollars you have in your ship.

DAVIDSON [*surprised but cautious*]. How on earth did they know I carry dollars on this trip?

ANNE [*intense*]. So you *have* dollars on board. Oh, Davy! Take your ship away quick.

DAVIDSON. Too late. The tide has left her already. Do they actually mean robbery? What do they take me for?

ANNE. That big man without hands wouldn't stick at murder. He is driving them on. He is a devil. If Tony hadn't been in this state I would have run away with him into the woods anywhere. . . . Oh, Davy! Will he die?

DAVIDSON. No, no. Don't get yourself in a state. You used to be plucky.

ANNE [*very quick*]. My pluck. It seems to be going. Ha—ha—ha. [*Little wild laugh.* DAVIDSON *passes to the other room where all the men at sound of* ANNE'S *laugh had turned their heads in a somewhat startled way.* ANNE *follows him with the candle, which she puts on the table, and returns to the child.*]

FECTOR. Will you join us in a drink, Captain?

DAVIDSON. I am in a hurry to fetch some drugs I have on board. [*Passes through doorway at the back.*

All get up from their seats except M. W. H. *who remains leaning back in his chair.*]

M. W. H. Now, get out all of you and see where the ship is moored—at the jetty or along the bank. We ought to know beforehand.

FECTOR. One of us would do.

M. W. H. No. I want each of you to know exactly where to put his foot when we board her in the dark, presently. You are such nervous skunks that you will be missing the gangway from sheer funk. I suppose when the time comes I will have to push you on—I! A miserable cripple! But when it comes to sharing, each of you will want his share.

FECTOR [*muttering*]. Certainly. [*Loud.*] Confound you, you bully us here from morning to night as if you had hired us for the job, whereas when it comes to it you won't be able to do anything.

M. W. H. [*shaking his stumps in front of his face*]. Curse my misfortune. [*With affected, savage cringing.*] I hope you won't try to cut down my share because I am a poor helpless, useless cripple. [*Ferocious.*] Get out and do what I tell you or else there will be nothing to share.

FECTOR. I will be glad when the job's over, if only to be done with your bullying.

BAMTZ. Oh God, yes! [M. W. H. *jumps up.* FECTOR *and* BAMTZ *make for the door, while* NAKHODA *dodges behind* M. W. H. *and is the last to go out.*]

M. W. H. [*standing by the table*]. Anne! [ANNE *in the other room raises her head from the cot with an air of terror.*] Anne! Here!

ANNE [*springs up from her knees*]. Oh, what is it now? [*Walks reluctant into the large room.*]

M. W. H. Now, then, pull yourself together. Where is that weight? Did you sneak it from the store?

ANNE [*faltering*]. I have got it there. [*Points to corner.*]

M. W. H. Quick then. Lose no time. Got a piece of string? [ANNE *stands stock-still with a face of despair.*] Ain't you going to be loyal to me? Don't you think I am man enough to be worth sticking to if I have no hands? [*Threatening.*] You have got to stick to me. What are you afraid of? We will go away together thousands of miles from here. Let me only see these dollars in here. On this table. Fetch that weight along now. [ANNE *rummages amongst a heap of things in the corner of the hut and comes forward with a seven-pound weight and a long piece of string.* M. W. H. *without looking at her.*] Got it?

ANNE. Yes.

M. W. H. The right stump, of course. [*Presents it.*] Lash it on properly too. It wouldn't do for it to come off. [ANNE *begins to fasten the weight with the piece of string.*] You see—a resolute man with a lump of iron like this at the end of his arm can crack three skulls long before the idiots with hands have time to pull out their revolvers. See? Especially if it is he who starts the scrimmage all of a sudden. I reckon there will be precious little sharing of those dollars. We will have the lot. Make a proper knot. Done it?

ANNE. Yes.

M. W. H. [*swinging his arm*]. Good. [*Puts the stump in his pocket and throws the other arm over* ANNE'S

shoulder.] You are the only one with a backbone. A poor, miserable, helpless, godforsaken cripple like me wants a companion for always . . . and you are the one. [ANNE *wriggles free from his arm and returns to the child.* M. W. H. *listens.*]

FECTOR [*voice outside*]. After you, Captain. We have been out for a breath of air. Isn't it hot though? [DAVIDSON *enters room with a spirit kettle in one hand and some sort of little box containing medicines.*]

M. W. H. [*who at first sound of voices had thrown himself back into his chair, to* DAVIDSON]. Isn't it unfortunate about that poor child?

DAVIDSON [*with meaning*]. Yes, and for the woman too.

M. W. H. A mother's feelings, of course. But I can't stand seeing a child suffer. I can't bear it. But what could I do, a poor cripple! I couldn't smooth the pillow of a dying friend. How lucky you turned up, just in the nick of time. Did they expect you? I was never so surprised in my life.

DAVIDSON [*who has stopped to listen*]. Not so much as I am. [*Passes into the other room.*]

FECTOR [*who with the other two, has been standing in the doorway*]. The night's as black as the inside of a cow. [*All three approach the table.*]

M. W. H. Did you make sure how the gangway is laid?

NAKHODA [*fatuous tone*]. Yes. There's a double plank. It will be quite easy for you.

M. W. H. Shut up, you idiot. [*The other subsides with a complacent smile.*] Come on, sit down, let's pretend to play cards or do some damned thing or

other. [*They sit down, take up cards, but look nervous, distracted and jumpy.*]

DAVIDSON [*in the other room, to* ANNE]. Here are some matches. I brought you a candle too. Light it, Anne. We will boil that kettle. [*Changed tone.*] So they came here to wait for the ship and rob her. It's the hardest thing to believe in I ever ran against in my life. [*Incredulous.*] They can't mean it.

ANNE. They mean it right enough and that man without hands has got pluck enough for the lot of them. [*She busies herself in lighting the lamp under the kettle and giving some medicine out of a spoon to the child.*] They think you are soft, Davy, ha—ha—ha. [*Laughs.*]

DAVIDSON [*sitting on a keg by the side of the cot, looking up*]. I don't know about being soft, but I know that if trouble comes I will be alone. I am the only white man on board and you know what those kalashes are. At the sound of the first shot all my crew will bolt ashore. I know them well. However, all this sounds like a fairy tale. A vile sort of fairy tale.

ANNE. Oh, Davy, they've been talking before me. [*A moan from the child.* ANNE *bending over cot.*] All right, Tony, Mama will give you a drink soon, a nice sweet drink. [*To* DAVIDSON.] Poor kid. There's nothing in life for such as he. Not a dog's chance. But I couldn't let him go, Davy, I couldn't let him go. No! No!

DAVIDSON. Steady, Anne. [*Looking at child.*] Feel him, he is less hot, he will soon be better.

ANNE [*seizing suddenly* DAVIDSON'S *arm for emphasis*]. Be careful of that devil without hands, Davy.

DAVIDSON. Well, he may be a devil, but without hands he can't do much, can he?

ANNE [*impressive*]. Mind you don't let him come near you, that's all. [*Hesitates.*] Listen. The others don't know, but he has made me tie a seven-pound weight on to his right stump. Do you understand?

DAVIDSON [*low whistle of astonishment*]. I see. H'm. All this seems more and more incredible. However . . .

ANNE. Davy, you may expect to see them crawling on board your ship about midnight to steal, to murder perhaps.

DAVIDSON [*discreetly*]. I had better get on board and get ready for the visitors. If they do come.

ANNE. It's no joking matter, Davy. I will come outside the hut with them when they start and it will be hard luck if I don't find occasion for a laugh. They are used to that from me. Laugh or cry, what's the odds. You will be able to hear me on board this quiet night. . . . You won't go to sleep—will you?

DAVIDSON. I will try not to. [*Serious.*] Don't you run any risks for me. [*Pointing to the cot.*] Look, he will be all right. [ANNE *drops on her knees by the cot and gazes at the child while* DAVIDSON *passes into the other room.*]

FECTOR. What about a drink now, Captain?

DAVIDSON. Thanks, I think I will go on board now and turn in. The child is better. He is sleeping. Don't make more noise than you can help.

FECTOR. Oh, we are a quiet lot; and if the invalid gets worse one of us will run down to call you so that you may play doctor again, so don't shoot at sight.

NAKHODA [*fatuous tone*]. He hasn't the name of a shooting man.

DAVIDSON [*contemptuous*]. I never shoot without making sure there is a good reason for it. [*To* BAMTZ.] The boy will be all right.

BAMTZ [*nervous laugh*]. Poor little chap. Thank you, Captain; thank you, Captain.

[M. W. H. *gets up, keeping his stumps in his pockets and makes a bow which* DAVIDSON *returns with a nod. Exit* DAVIDSON.]

ACT II: Scene 2

DARKENED scene with, at the back and extending nearly across, the darker shape of Bamtz's *hut raised a little above level of the stage, with a very dim light showing the square of the doorway. To right, stern of a small ship with a gangway of two planks to the shore and a pair of mooring ropes to the stump of a tree in the foreground. On board, a hammock swung to a boom, with a mosquito net over it, and a bit of skylight, which is all that is shown of the ship on the stage, the rest being in the wings. A few bushes on the bank in which the wind makes a faint rustle. After the curtain has been up for some time the distant crowing of a cock is heard faintly. Again the bushes rustle. The dimly lit doorway in the distance is darkened four different times and* Anne's *characteristic laugh is heard very clear, but very faint. Then in the darkness of the stage four figures, noiseless, come stealing forward towards the plank gangway.*

Fector [*sibilant whisper*]. No murder. I have no mind to hang.

M. W. H. And suppose he resists?

Bamtz [*with chattering teeth*]. He w-w-w-on't.

Nakhoda [*scared voice*]. He's not a shooting man.

M. W. H. Get on board, you skunks.

[*The business of getting on board should be conducted with every appearance of stealth.* Fector, *as the most agile, runs suddenly up without noise, gets on deck, passes on in wing. Next* Nakhoda

crawls up by starts. As to BAMTZ, *he hangs back and even resists a push from* M. W. H. *at first.*]

BAMTZ [*whispers*]. No murder.

M. W. H. You damned coward. I will do the murdering, if necessary. Get up. Don't drop the crowbar. [BAMTZ *proceeds up the gangway on all fours, and sliding past the hammock follows the others into the wing out of sight. Then* M. W. H. *follows with deliberate noiseless pace, step by step, and once on deck stands by the hammock, on watch. A light appears very dimly in the bit of skylight that is visible on the stage and a cracking sound is heard as if some one has been prising open a door.* M. W. H. *makes one step forward towards hammock. Another crack. Takes another step, mutters wildly*]. Why not make sure! [*By-play representing ferocious irresistible impulse. Swings stump up with weight and brings it down on the hammock where the head should be, also throwing himself with a savage grunt upon it, so that hammock collapses under him and is seen to be empty,* M. W. H. *getting a bad fall, jumps up in dismay, yells*]: Treason, treason! [*Dashes over the gangway on the bank yelling*]: We have been sold. Look out for yourselves. [*Shots are heard in the wing.*] Kill him, kill him! [*The three others follow in a panic, falling over each other while* DAVIDSON *fires repeatedly, and in a confusion and flashes of shots and screams of pain they leap on shore and vanish completely from sight while* DAVIDSON *stands aft, the only person visible to the audience now.* DAVIDSON *has a revolver in each hand, he throws down the empty one, peers into the darkness from which there are sounds of moans and a shout from* M. W. H.] It's that damned woman that has given us away. Where are you, you damned cowards! Ha! [M. W. H. *dimly seen for a moment disappears in direction of hut.*]

DAVIDSON [*slapping his forehead*]. My God, poor Anne. [*He goes ashore, and stands irresolute in the darkness. Starts at a shriek to the left, and the faintest appearance of the running figure of* ANNE. *Makes irresolute step to right. Shriek behind him. Spins round on his heel. Then at the back of stage there must be just enough light to show* M. W. H. *cutting off* ANNE *who is trying to run into the house. They vanish again. A long shriek, cut dead short.*] Run on board, Anne. [*Silence.* DAVIDSON *makes a step or two when the shadow of* M. W. H. *jumps up from the ground and vanishes and* DAVIDSON *stumbles over the body of* ANNE *lying on her face. All the time he must convey by his action that he is in mortal terror of something jumping on him in the dark. Kneels.*] Anne, Anne. [*Tries to lift her.*]

ANNE [*weak voice*]. He knocked me over. Never mind me. The kid. Get the kid out, Davy. [*Moan.* DAVIDSON *makes a step forward towards the house, spins round at an imaginary sound behind him. For a moment his heart fails him and he makes a motion as if to get back on board, then suddenly pulls himself together and with one hand extended and his head over his shoulder all the time paces stiffly on towards the dim light at back of stage and goes within. Directly he vanishes out of the light the vague form of* M. W. H. *appears running, stops, muttering:* I must finish that job. *Stoops, feels over the ground for* ANNE'S *body, squats over it, lifting the stump with the weight. The dim square of light in hut vanishes and directly afterwards the faint voice of child is heard calling:* Mama, Mama!]

DAVIDSON. Be quiet, Tony. [*His form carrying the child on his left arm and whispering again:* Be quiet, Tony, *comes into view. As he approaches the hardly*

seen figure of M. W. H. *squatting over* ANNE, M. W. H. *jumps up.* DAVIDSON *fires. The child whimpers.*]

M. W. H. Damn his soul! He's got me. [*Deep groan, falls.*]

DAVIDSON [*advances, feeling with his foot for* ANNE, *then, with his left hand pressing the child's head to his shoulder, he kneels down and in a low voice says*]: Anne. [*He picks up her hand. The boy in a stifled voice whimpers:* Mama. DAVIDSON *drops* ANNE'S *hand, which falls lifeless, and moves on toward the ship, shouting*]: On deck there! On deck! Serang!

SERANG'S VOICE. Ya, Tuan.

DAVIDSON. Bring a lantern. Here, take the child. [*Hands child over rail.*] You curs, where have you been hiding? All of you cleared out, eh?

SERANG. They frightened. All back on board now, Tuan.

DAVIDSON [*to* SERANG *on board*]. Send four men ashore. There is a dead body there which we are going to take out to sea. [*He moves, carrying the lantern low, followed by four Malays in blue dungaree suits, dark faces. Stands the lantern on the ground by the body and looking down at it apostrophizes the corpse.*] Poor Anne! You are on my conscience, but your boy shall have his chance.

[*As the kalashes stoop to lift up the body* CURTAIN *falls.*]

ONE DAY MORE

CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN HAGBERD: A retired coasting skipper.

JOSIAH CARVIL: Formerly a shipbuilder—a widower —blind.

HARRY HAGBERD: Son of CAPTAIN HAGBERD, who, as a boy, ran away from home.

A LAMPLIGHTER.

BESSIE CARVIL: Daughter of JOSIAH CARVIL.

PLACE: A small sea-port.

TIME: The present—early autumn, towards dusk.

STAGE REPRESENTS: To right—two yellow brick cottages belonging to CAPTAIN HAGBERD, one is inhabited by himself, the other by the CARVILS, A lamp-post in front. The red roofs of the town in the background. A sea-wall to left.

Note.—The division into scenes is made in a purely dramatic sense. It has nothing to do with the scenery. It relates only to the varied grouping of the characters with the consequent changes into the mental and emotional atmosphere of the situation.

ONE DAY MORE

ONE DAY MORE

SCENE I

CURTAIN rises disclosing CARVIL *and* BESSIE *moving away from sea-wall.* BESSIE *about twenty-five. Black dress, black straw hat. A lot of mahogany-coloured hair loosely done up. Pale face. Full figure. Very quiet.* CARVIL, *blind, unwieldy. Reddish whiskers; slow, deep voice produced without effort. Immovable, big face.*

CARVIL [*hanging heavily on* BESSIE'S *arm*]. Careful! Go slow! [*Stops;* BESSIE *waits patiently.*] Want your poor blind father to break his neck? [*Shuffles on.*] In a hurry to get home and start that everlasting yarn with your chum the lunatic?

BESSIE. I am not in a hurry to get home, Father.

CARVIL. Well, then, go steady with a poor blind man. Blind! Helpless! [*Strikes the ground with his stick.*] Never mind! I've had time to make enough money to have ham and eggs for breakfast every morning—thank God! And thank God, too, for it, girl. You haven't known a single hardship in all the days of your idle life. Unless you think that a blind, helpless father——

BESSIE. What is there for me to be in a hurry for?

CARVIL. What did you say?

BESSIE. I said there was nothing for me to hurry home for.

CARVIL. There is, tho'. To yarn with a lunatic. Anything to get away from your duty.

BESSIE. Captain Hagberd's talk never hurt you or anybody else.

CARVIL. Go on. Stick up for your only friend.

BESSIE. Is it my fault that I haven't another soul to speak to?

CARVIL [*snarls*]. It's mine, perhaps. Can I help being blind? You fret because you want to be gadding about—with a helpless man left all alone at home. Your own father, too.

BESSIE. I haven't been away from you half a day since Mother died.

CARVIL [*viciously*]. He's a lunatic, our landlord is. That's what he is. Has been for years—long before those damned doctors destroyed my sight for me. [*Growls angrily, then sighs.*]

BESSIE. Perhaps Captain Hagberd is not so mad as the town takes him for.

CARVIL [*grimly*]. Don't everybody know how he came here from the North to wait till his missing son turns up—here—of all places in the world. His boy that ran away to sea sixteen years ago and never did give a sign of life since! Don't I remember seeing people dodge round corners out of his way when he came along High Street. Seeing him, I tell you. [*Groan.*] He bothered everybody so with his silly talk of his son being sure to come back home—next year—next spring—next month—— What is it by this time, hey?

BESSIE. Why talk about it? He bothers no one now.

CARVIL. No. They've grown too fly. You've got only to pass a remark on his sail-cloth coat to make him shut up. All the town knows it. But he's got you to listen to his crazy talk whenever he chooses. Don't I hear you two at it, jabber, jabber, mumble, mumble——

BESSIE. What is there so mad in keeping up hope?

CARVIL [*scathing scorn*]. Not mad! Starving himself to lay money by—for that son. Filling his house with furniture he won't let any one see—for that son. Advertising in the papers every week, these sixteen years—for that son. Not mad!" "Boy," he calls him, "Boy Harry." His boy Harry. His lost boy Harry. Yah! Let him lose his sight to know what real trouble means. And the boy—the man, I should say—must've been put away safe in Davy Jones's locker for many a year—drowned—food for fishes—dead. . . . Stands to reason, or he would have been here before, smelling around the old fool's money. [*Shakes* BESSIE's *arm slightly.*] Hey?

BESSIE. I don't know. Maybe.

CARVIL [*bursting out*]. Damme if I don't think he ever had a son.

BESSIE. Poor man. Perhaps he never had.

CARVIL. Ain't that mad enough for you? But I suppose you think it sensible.

BESSIE. What does it matter? His talk keeps him up.

CARVIL. Aye! And it pleases you. Anything to get away from your poor blind father . . . Jabber, jabber—mumble, mumble—till I begin to think you

must be as crazy as he is. What do you find to talk about, you two? What's your game?

[*During the scene* CARVIL *and* BESSIE *have crossed stage from L. to R. slowly with stoppages.*]

BESSIE. It's warm. Will you sit out for a while?

CARVIL [*viciously*]. Yes, I will sit out. [*Insistent.*] But what can be your game? What are you up to? [*They pass through garden gate.*] Because if it's his money you are after——

BESSIE. Father! How can you!

CARVIL [*disregarding her*]. To make you independent of your poor blind father, then you are a fool. [*Drops heavily on seat.*] He's too much of a miser to ever make a will—even if he weren't mad.

BESSIE. Oh! It never entered my head. I swear it never did.

CARVIL. Never did. Hey! Then you are a still bigger fool. . . . I want to go to sleep! [*Takes off his hat, drops it on ground, and leans his head back against the wall.*]

BESSIE. And I have been a good daughter to you. Won't you say that for me?

CARVIL [*very distinctly*]. I want—to—go—to—sleep. I'm tired. [*Closes his eyes.*]

[*During the scene* CAPTAIN HAGBERD *has been seen hesitating at the back of stage, then running quickly to the door of his cottage. He puts inside a tin kettle—from under his coat—and comes down to the railing between the two gardens, stealthily.*]

SCENE II

CARVIL *seated.* BESSIE. CAPTAIN HAGBERD *white beard, sail-cloth jacket.*

BESSIE [*knitting*]. You've been out this afternoon for quite a long time, haven't you?

CAPT. HAGBERD [*eager*]. Yes, my dear. [*Slyly.*] Of course you saw me come back.

BESSIE. Oh, yes. I did see you. You had something under your coat.

CAPT. H. [*anxiously*]. It was only a kettle, my dear. A tin water-kettle. I am glad I thought of it just in time. [*Winks, nods.*] When a husband gets back from his work he needs a lot of water for a wash. See? [*Dignified.*] Not that Harry'll ever need to do a hand's turn after he comes home . . . [*Falters—casts stealthy glances on all sides*] . . . to-morrow.

BESSIE [*looks up, grave*]. Captain Hagberd, have you ever thought that perhaps your son will not . . .

CAPT. H. [*paternally*]. I've thought of everything, my dear—of everything a reasonable young couple may need for housekeeping. Why, I can hardly turn about in my room up there, the house is that full. [*Rubs his hands with satisfaction.*] For my son Harry—when he comes home. One day more.

BESSIE [*flattering*]. Oh, you are a great one for bargains. [CAPT H., *delighted.*] But Captain Hagberd—if—if—you don't know what may happen—if all that

home you've got together were to be wasted—for nothing—after all. [*Aside.*] Oh, I can't bring it out.

CAPT. H. [*agitated; flings arms up, stamps feet; stuttering*]. What? What d'ye mean? What's going to happen to the things?

BESSIE [*soothing*]. Nothing! Nothing! Dust—or moth—you know. Damp, perhaps. You never let any one into the house . . .

CAPT. H. Dust! Damp! [*Has a throaty, gurgling laugh.*] I light the fires and dust the things myself. [*Indignant.*] Let any one into the house, indeed! What would Harry say! [*Walks up and down his garden hastily with tosses, flings, and jerks of his whole body.*]

BESSIE [*with authority*]. Now, then, Captain Hagberd! You know I won't put up with your tantrums. [*Shakes finger at him.*]

CAPT. H. [*subdued, but still sulky, with his back to her*]. You want to see the things. That's what you're after. Well, no, not even you. Not till Harry has had his first look.

BESSIE. Oh, no! I don't. [*Relenting.*] Not till you're willing. [*Smiles at* CAPT. H., *who has turned half round already.*] You mustn't excite yourself. [*Knits.*]

CAPT. H. [*condescending*]. And you the only sensible girl for miles and miles around. Can't you trust me? I am a domestic man. Always was, my dear. I hated the sea. People don't know what they let their boys into when they send them to sea. As soon make convicts of them at once. What sort of life is it? Most of your time you don't know what's going on at home. [*Insinuating.*] There's nothing anywhere on earth as

good as a home, my dear. [*Pause.*] With a good husband . . .

CARVIL [*heard from his seat, fragmentarily*]. There they go . . . jabber, jabber . . . mumble, mumble. [*With a groaning effort.*] Helpless! [BESSIE *has glanced round at him.*]

CAPT. H. [*mutters*]. Extravagant ham-and-eggs fellow. [*Louder.*] Of course it isn't as if he had a son to make a home ready for. Girls are different, my dear. They don't run away, my dear, my dear. [*Agitated.*]

BESSIE [*drops her arms, wearily*]. No, Captain Hagberd—they don't.

CAPT. H. [*slowly*]. I wouldn't let my own flesh and blood go to sea. Not I.

BESSIE. And the boy ran away.

CAPT. H. [*a little vacantly*]. Yes, my only son Harry. [*Rouses himself.*] Coming home to-morrow.

BESSIE [*looks at him pityingly; speaks softly*]. Sometimes, Captain Hagberd, a hope turns out false.

CAPT. H. [*uneasy*]. What's that got to do with Harry's coming back?

BESSIE. It's good to hope for something. But suppose now—— [*Feeling her way.*] Yours is not the only lost son that's never . . .

CAPT. H. Never what? You don't believe he's drowned? [*Crouches, glaring and grasping the rails.*]

BESSIE [*frightened, drops knitting*]. Captain Hagberd—don't. [*Catches hold of his shoulders over the railings.*] Don't—my God! he's going out of his mind! [*Cries.*] I didn't mean it! I don't know.

CAPT. H. [*has backed away. An affected burst of laughter*]. What nonsense! None of us Hagberds belonged to the sea. All farmers for hundreds of years. [*Paternal and cunning.*] Don't alarm yourself, my dear. The sea can't get us. Look at me! I didn't get drowned. Moreover, Harry ain't a sailor at all. And if he isn't a sailor, he's bound to come back—tomorrow.

BESSIE [*has been facing him; murmurs*]. No. I give it up. He scares me. [*Aloud, sharply.*] Then I would give up that advertising in the papers.

CAPT. H. [*surprised and puzzled*]. Why, my dear? Everybody does it. His poor mother and I have been advertising for years and years. But she was an impatient woman. She died.

BESSIE. If your son's coming, as—as you say—what's the good of that expense? You had better spend that half-crown on yourself. I believe you don't eat enough.

CAPT. H. [*confused*]. But it's the right thing to do. Look at the Sunday papers. Missing relatives on top page—all proper. [*Looks unhappy.*]

BESSIE [*tartly*]. Ah, well! I declare I don't know what you live on.

CAPT. H. Are you getting impatient, my dear? Don't get impatient—like my poor wife. If she'd only been patient she'd be here. Waiting—only one day more. [*Pleadingly.*] Don't be impatient, my dear.

BESSIE. I've no patience with you sometimes.

CAPT. H. [*flash of lucidity*]. Why? What's the matter? [*Sympathetic.*] You're tired out, my dear, that's what it is.

BESSIE. Yes, I am. Day after day. [*Stands listless, arms hanging down.*]

CAPT. H. [*timidly*]. House dull?

BESSIE [*apathetic*]. Yes.

CAPT. H. [*as before*]. H'm. Wash, cook, scrub. Hey?

BESSIE [*as before*]. Yes.

CAPT. H. [*pointing stealthily at the sleeping* CARVIL]. Heavy?

BESSIE [*in a dead voice*]. Like a millstone.

[*A silence.*]

CAPT. H. [*burst of indignation*]. Why don't that extravagant fellow get you a servant?

BESSIE. I don't know.

CAPT. H. [*cheerily*]. Wait till Harry comes home. He'll get you one.

BESSIE [*almost hysterical: laughs*]. Why, Captain Hagberd, perhaps your son won't even want to look at me—when he comes home.

CAPT. H. [*in a great voice*]. What! [*Quite low.*] The boy wouldn't dare. [*Rising choler.*] Wouldn't dare to refuse the only sensible girl for miles around. That stubborn jackanapes refuse to marry a girl like you! [*Walks about in a fury.*] You trust me, my dear, my dear, my dear. I'll make him. I'll—I'll—— [*Splutters.*] Cut him off with a shilling.

BESSIE. Hush! [*Severe.*] You mustn't talk like that. What's this? More of your tantrums?

CAPT. H. [*quite humble*]. No, no—this isn't my tantrums—when I don't feel quite well in my head.

Only I can't stand this. . . . I've grown as fond of you as if you'd been the wife of my Harry already. And to be told—— [*Can't restrain himself, shouts.*] Jackanapes!

BESSIE. Sh——! Don't you worry! [*Wearily.*] I must give that up, too, I suppose. [*Aloud.*] I didn't mean it, Captain Hagberd.

CAPT. H. It's as if I were to have two children to-morrow. My son Harry—and the only sensible girl—— Why, my dear, I couldn't get on without you. We two are reasonable together. The rest of the people in the town are crazy. The way they stare at you. And the grins—they're all on the grin. It makes me dislike to go out. [*Bewildered.*] It seems as if there was something wrong about—somewhere. My dear, is there anything wrong—you who are sensible . . .

BESSIE [*soothingly tender*]. No, no, Captain Hagberd. There is nothing wrong about you anywhere.

CARVIL [*lying back*]. Bessie! [*Sits up.*] Get my hat, Bessie. . . . Bessie, my hat. . . . Bessie . . . Bessie . . . [*At the first sound* BESSIE *picks up and puts away her knitting. She walks towards him, picks up hat, puts it on his head.*] Bessie my . . . [*Hat on head: shouting stops.*]

BESSIE [*quietly*]. Will you go in, now?

CARVIL. Help me up. Steady. I'm dizzy. It's the thundery weather. An autumn thunderstorm means a bad gale. Very fierce—and sudden. There will be shipwrecks to-night on our coast.

[*Exit* BESSIE *and* CARVIL *through door of their cottage. It has fallen dusk.*]

CAPT. H. [*picks up spade*]. Extravagant fellow! And all this town is mad—perfectly mad. I found them out years ago. Thank God they don't come this way staring and grinning. I can't bear them. I'll never go again into that High Street. [*Agitated.*] Never, never, never. Won't need to, after to-morrow. Never! [*Flings down spade in a passion.*]

[*While* HAGBERD *speaks, the bow window of the* CARVILS *is lit up, and* BESSIE *is seen settling her father in a big armchair. Pulls down blind. Enter* LAMPLIGHTER. CAPT. H. *picks up the spade and leans forward on it with both hands; very still, watching him light the lamp.*]

LAMPLIGHTER [*jocular*]. There! You will be able to dig by lamplight if the fancy takes you.

[*Exit* LAMPLIGHTER *to back.*]

CAPT. H. [*disgusted*]. Ough! The people here . . . [*Shudders.*]

LAMPLIGHTER'S VOICE [*heard loudly beyond the cottages*]. Yes, that's the way.

[*Enter* HARRY *from back.*]

SCENE III

CAPT. HAGBERD. HARRY. *Later,* BESSIE.

HARRY HAGBERD [*thirty-one, tall, broad shoulders, shaven face, small moustache. Blue serge suit. Coat open. Grey flannel shirt without collar and tie. No waistcoat. Belt with buckle. Black, soft felt hat, wide-brimmed, worn crushed in the crown and a little on one side. Good nature, recklessness, some swagger in the bearing. Assured, deliberate walk with a heavy tread. Slight roll in the gait. Walks down. Stops, hands in pockets. Looks about. Speaks*]. This must be it. Can't see anything beyond. There's somebody. [*Walks up to* CAPT. H.'s *gate.*] Can you tell me . . . [*Manner changes. Leans elbow on gate.*] Why, you must be Captain Hagberd himself.

CAPT. H. [*in garden, both hands on spade, peering, startled*]. Yes, I am.

HARRY [*slowly*]. You've been advertising in the papers for your son, I believe.

CAPT. H. [*off his guard, nervous*]. Yes. My only boy Harry. He's coming home to-morrow. [*Mumbles.*] For a permanent stay.

HARRY [*surprised*]. The devil he is! [*Change of tone.*] My word! You've grown a beard like Father Christmas himself.

CAPT. H. [*impressively*]. Go your way. [*Waves one hand loftily.*] What's that to you? Go your way. [*Agitated.*] Go your way.

HARRY. There, there. I am not trespassing in the street—where I stand—am I? Tell you what, I fancy there's something wrong about your nerves. Suppose you let me come in—for a quiet chat, you know.

CAPT. H. [*horrified*]. Let you—*you* come in!

HARRY [*persuasive*]. Because I could give you some real information about your son. The—very—latest—tip. If you care to hear.

CAPT. H. [*explodes*]. No! I don't care to hear. [*Begins to pace to and fro, spade on shoulder. Gesticulating with his other arm.*] Here's a fellow—a grinning town fellow, who says there's something wrong. [*Fiercely.*] I have got more information than you're aware of. I have all the information I want. I have had it for years—for years—for years—enough to last me till to-morrow! Let you come in, indeed! What would Harry say?

[BESSIE CARVIL *enters at cottage door with a white wrap on her head and stands in her garden trying to see.*]

BESSIE. What's the matter?

CAPT. H. [*beside himself*]. An information fellow. [*Stumbles.*]

HARRY [*putting out arm to steady him, gravely*]. Here! Steady a bit! Seems to me somebody's been trying to get at you. [*Change of tone.*] Hullo! What's this rig you've got on? . . . Storm canvas coat, by George! [*He gives a big, throaty laugh.*] Well! You *are* a character!

CAPT. H. [*daunted by the allusion, looks at coat*]. I—I wear it for—for the time being. Till—till—to-morrow. [*Shrinks away, spade in hand, to door of his cottage.*]

BESSIE [*advancing*]. And what may you want, sir?

HARRY [*turns to* BESSIE *at once; easy manner*]. I'd like to know about this swindle that's going to be sprung on him. I didn't mean to startle the old man. You see, on my way here I dropped into a barber's to get a twopenny shave, and they told me there that he was something of a character. He has been a character all his life.

BESSIE [*very low, wondering*]. What swindle?

CAPT. H. A grinning fellow! [*Makes sudden dash indoors with the spade. Door slams. Lock clicks. Affected gurgling laugh within.*]

SCENE IV

BESSIE *and* HARRY. *Later,* CAPT. HAGBERD *from window.*

HARRY [*after a short silence*]. What on earth's upset him so? What's the meaning of all this fuss? He isn't always like that, is he?

BESSIE. I don't know who you are; but I may tell you that his mind has been troubled for years about an only son who ran away from home—a long time ago. Everybody knows that here.

HARRY [*thoughtful*]. Troubled—for years! [*Suddenly.*] Well, I am the son.

BESSIE [*steps back*]. You! . . . Harry!

HARRY [*amused, dry tone*]. Got hold of my name, eh? Been making friends with the old man?

BESSIE [*distressed*]. Yes . . . I . . . sometimes . . . [*Rapidly.*] He's our landlord.

HARRY [*scornfully*]. Owns both them rabbit hutches, does he? Just a thing he'd be proud of. . . . [*Earnest.*] And now you had better tell me all about that chap who's coming to-morrow. Know anything of him? I reckon there's more than one in that little game. Come! Out with it! [*Chaffing.*] I don't take no . . . from women.

BESSIE [*bewildered*]. Oh! It's so difficult . . . What had I better do?

HARRY [*good humoured*]. Make a clean breast of it.

BESSIE [*wildly, to herself*]. Impossible! [*Starts.*] You don't understand. I must think—see—try to—I, I must have time. Plenty of time.

HARRY. What for? Come. Two words. And don't be afraid for yourself. I ain't going to make it a police job. But it's the other fellow that'll get upset when he least expects it. There'll be some fun when he shows his mug here to-morrow. [*Snaps fingers.*] I don't care that for the old man's dollars, but right is right. You shall see me put a head on that coon, whoever he is.

BESSIE [*wrings hands slightly*]. What had I better do? [*Suddenly to* HARRY.] It's you—you yourself that we —that he's waiting for. It's *you* who are to come to-morrow.

HARRY [*slowly*]. Oh! it's me! [*Perplexed.*] There's something there I can't understand. I haven't written ahead or anything. It was my chum who showed me the advertisement with the old boy's address, this very morning—in London.

BESSIE [*anxious*]. How can I make it plain to you without . . . [*Bites her lip, embarrassed.*] Sometimes he talks so strangely.

HARRY [*expectant*]. Does he? What about?

BESSIE. Only you. And he will stand no contradicting.

HARRY [*stubborn*]. Eh? The old man hasn't changed much from what I can remember. [*They stand looking at each other helplessly.*]

BESSIE. He's made up his mind you would come back . . . to-morrow.

HARRY. I can't hang about here till morning. Got no money to get a bed. Not a cent. But why won't to-day do?

BESSIE. Because you've been too long away.

HARRY [*with force*]. Look here, they fairly drove me out. Poor mother nagged at me for being idle, and the old man said he would cut my soul out of my body rather than let me go to sea.

BESSIE [*murmurs*]. He can bear no contradicting.

HARRY [*continuing*]. Well, it looked as tho' he would do it, too. So I went. [*Moody.*] It seems to me sometimes I was born to them by a mistake . . . in that other rabbit hutch of a house.

BESSIE [*a little mocking*]. And where do you think you ought to have been born by rights?

HARRY. In the open—upon a beach—on a windy night.

BESSIE [*faintly*]. Ah!

HARRY. They were characters, both of them, by George! Shall I try the door?

BESSIE. Wait. I must explain to you why it is to-morrow.

HARRY. Aye. That you must, or . . .

[*Window in* H.'s *cottage runs up.*]

CAPT. H.'S VOICE [*above*]. A—grinning—information—fellow coming to worry me in my own garden! What next?

[*Window rumbles down.*]

BESSIE. Yes. I must. [*Lays hand on* HARRY'S *sleeve.*] Let's get further off. Nobody ever comes this way after dark.

HARRY [*careless laugh*]. Aye. A good road for a walk with a girl.

[*They turn their backs on audience and move up the stage, slowly. Close together.* HARRY *bends his head over* BESSIE.]

BESSIE'S VOICE [*beginning eagerly*]. People here somehow did not take kindly to him.

HARRY'S VOICE. Aye. Aye. I understand that.

[*They walk slowly back towards the front.*]

BESSIE. He was almost ready to starve himself for your sake.

HARRY. And I had to starve more than once for his whim.

BESSIE. I'm afraid you've a hard heart. [*Remains thoughtful.*]

HARRY. What for? For running away? [*Indignant.*] Why, he wanted to make a blamed lawyer's clerk of me.

[*From here this scene goes on mainly near and about the street lamp.*

BESSIE [*rousing herself*]. What are you? A sailor?

HARRY. Anything you like. [*Proudly.*] Sailor enough to be worth my salt on board any craft that swims the seas.

BESSIE. He will never, never believe it. He mustn't be contradicted.

HARRY. Always liked to have his own way. And you've been encouraging him.

BESSIE [*earnestly*]. No!—not in everything—not really!

HARRY [*vexed laugh*]. What about that pretty to-morrow notion? I've a hungry chum in London—waiting for me.

BESSIE [*defending herself*]. Why should I make the poor old friendless man miserable? I thought you were far away. I thought you were dead. I didn't know but you had never been born. I . . . I . . . [HARRY *turns to her. She desperately.*] It was easier to believe it myself. [*Carried away.*] And after all it's true. It's come to pass. This is the to-morrow we've been waiting for.

HARRY [*half perfunctorily*]. Aye. Anybody can see that your heart is as soft as your voice.

BESSIE [*as if unable to keep back the words*]. I didn't think you would have noticed my voice.

HARRY [*already inattentive*]. H'm. Dashed scrape. This is a queer to-morrow, without any sort of to-day, as far as I can see. [*Resolutely.*] I must try the door.

BESSIE. Well—try, then.

HARRY [*from gate looking over shoulder at* BESSIE]. He ain't likely to fly out at me, is he? I would be afraid of laying my hands on him. The chaps are always telling me I don't know my own strength.

BESSIE [*in front*]. He's the most harmless creature that ever . . .

HARRY. You wouldn't say so if you had seen him walloping me with a hard leather strap. [*Walking up*

garden.] I haven't forgotten it in sixteen long years. [*Rat-tat-tat, twice.*] Hullo, Dad. [BESSIE *intensely expectant. Rat-tat-tat.*] Hullo, Dad, let me in. I am your own Harry. Straight. Your son Harry come back home—a day too soon.

[*Window above rumbles up.*]

CAPT. H. [*seen leaning out, aiming with spade*]. Aha!

BESSIE [*warningly*]. Look out, Harry! [*Spade falls.*] Are you hurt?

[*Window rumbles down.*]

HARRY [*in the distance*]. Only grazed my hat.

BESSIE. Thank God! [*Intensely.*] What'll he do now?

HARRY [*comes forward, slamming gate behind him*]. Just like old times. Nearly licked the life out of me for wanting to go away, and now I come back he shies a confounded old shovel at my head. [*Fumes. Laughs a little.*] I wouldn't care, only poor little Ginger—Ginger's my chum up in London—he will starve while I walk back all the way from here. [*Faces* BESSIE *blankly.*] I spent my last two-pence on a shave . . . Out of respect for the old man.

BESSIE. I think, if you let me, I could manage to talk him round in a week, maybe. [*A muffled periodical bellowing has been heard faintly for some time.*]

HARRY [*on the alert*]. What's this? Who's making this row? Hark! Bessie, Bessie. It's in your house, I believe.

BESSIE [*without stirring, drearily*]. It's for me.

HARRY [*discreetly, whispering*]. Good voice for a ship's deck in a squall. Your husband? [*Steps out of lamplight.*]

BESSIE. No. My father. He's blind. [*Pause.*] I'm not married.

[*Bellowings grow louder.*]

HARRY. Oh, I say. What's up? Who's murdering him?

BESSIE [*calmly*]. I expect he's finished his tea. [*Bellowing continues regularly.*]

HARRY. Hadn't you better see to it? You'll have the whole town coming out here presently. [BESSIE *moves off.*] I say! [BESSIE *stops.*] Couldn't you scare up some bread and butter for me from that tea? I'm hungry. Had no breakfast.

BESSIE [*starts off at the word "hungry," dropping to the ground the white woollen shawl*]. I won't be a minute. Don't go away.

HARRY [*alone; picks up shawl absently, and, looking at it spread out in his hands, pronounces slowly*]. A—dam'—silly—scrape. [*Pause. Throws shawl on arm. Strolls up and down. Mutters.*] No money to get back. [*Louder.*] Silly little Ginger'll think I've got hold of the pieces and given an old shipmate the go by. One good shove—[*makes motion of bursting in door with his shoulders*]—would burst that door in—I bet. [*Looks about.*] I wonder where the nearest bobby is? No. They would want to bundle me neck and crop into chokey. [*Shudders.*] Perhaps. It makes me dog sick to think of being locked up. Haven't got the nerve. Not for prison. [*Leans against lamp-post.*] And not a cent for my fare. I wonder if that girl now . . .

BESSIE [*coming hastily forward, plate with bread and meat in hand*]. I didn't take time to get anything else.

HARRY [*begins to eat*]. You're not standing treat to a beggar. My dad is a rich man—you know.

BESSIE [*plate in hand*]. You resemble your father.

HARRY. I was the very image of him in face from a boy—[*Eats*]—and that's about as far as it goes. He was always one of your domestic characters. He looked sick when he had to go to sea for a fortnight's trip. [*Laughs.*] He was all for house and home.

BESSIE. And you? Have you never wished for a home? [*Goes off with empty plate and puts it down hastily on* CARVIL'S *bench—out of sight.*]

HARRY [*left in front*]. Home! If I found myself shut up in what the old man calls a home, I would kick it down about my ears on the third day—or else go to bed and die before the week was out. Die in a house—ough!

BESSIE [*returning; stops and speaks from garden railing*]. And where is it that you would wish to die?

HARRY. In the bush, in the sea, on some blamed mountain-top for choice. No such luck, tho', I suppose.

BESSIE [*from distance*]. Would that be luck?

HARRY. Yes! For them that make the whole world their home.

BESSIE [*comes forward shyly*]. The world's a cold home—they say.

HARRY [*a little gloomy*]. So it is. When a man's done for.

BESSIE. You see! [*Taunting.*] And a ship's not so very big after all.

HARRY. No. But the sea is great. And then what of the ship! You love her and leave her, Miss—Bessie's your name—isn't it? . . . I like that name.

BESSIE. You like my name! I wonder you remembered it. . . . That's why, I suppose.

HARRY [*slight swagger in voice*]. What's the odds! As long as a fellow has lived. And a voyage isn't a marriage—as we sailors say.

BESSIE. So you're not married—[*movement of* HARRY]—to any ship.

HARRY [*soft laugh*]. Ship! I've loved and left more of them than I can remember. I've been nearly everything you can think of but a tinker or a soldier; I've been a boundary rider; I've sheared sheep and humped my swag and harpooned a whale; I've rigged ships and skinned dead bullocks and prospected for gold—and turned my back on more money than the old man would have scraped together in his whole life.

BESSIE [*thoughtfully*]. I could talk him over in a week. . . .

HARRY [*negligently*]. I dare say you could. [*Joking.*] I don't know but what I could make shift to wait if you only promise to talk to me now and then. I've grown quite fond of your voice. I like a right woman's voice.

BESSIE [*averted head*]. Quite fond! [*Sharply.*] Talk! Nonsense! Much you'd care. [*Business-like.*] Of course I would have to, sometimes. . . . [*Thoughtful again.*] Yes. In a week—if—if only I knew you would try to get on with him afterwards.

HARRY [*leaning against lamp-post; growls through his teeth*]. More humouring. Ah! well, no! [*Hums significantly.*]

Oh, oh, oh, Rio, . . .
And fare thee well
My bonnie young girl,
We're bound for Rio Grande.

BESSIE [*shivering*]. What's this?

HARRY. Why! The chorus of an up-anchor tune. Kiss and go. A deep-water ship's good-bye. . . . You are cold. Here's that thing of yours I've picked up and forgot there on my arm. Turn round a bit. So. [*Wraps her up—commanding.*] Hold the ends together in front.

BESSIE [*softly*]. A week is not so very long.

HARRY [*begins violently*]. You think that I——[*Stops with sidelong look at her.*] I can't dodge about in ditches and live on air and water. Can I? I haven't any money—you know.

BESSIE. He's been scraping and saving up for years. All he has is for you, and perhaps . . .

HARRY [*interrupts*]. Yes. If I come to sit on it like a blamed toad in a hole. Thank you.

BESSIE [*angrily*]. What did you come for, then?

HARRY [*promptly*]. For five quid—[*pause*]—after a jolly good spree.

BESSIE [*scathingly*]. You and that—that chum of yours have been drinking.

HARRY [*laughs*]. Don't fly out, Miss Bessie—dear. Ginger's not a bad little chap. Can't take care of himself, tho'. Blind three days. [*Serious.*] Don't

think I am given that way. Nothing and nobody can get over me unless I like. I can be as steady as a rock.

BESSIE [*murmurs*]. Oh! I don't think you are bad.

HARRY [*approvingly*]. You're right there. [*Impulsive.*] Ask the girls all over——[*Checks himself.*] Ginger, he's long-headed too, in his way—mind you. He sees the paper this morning, and says he to me, "Hallo! Look at that, Harry—loving parent—that's five quid, sure." So we scraped all our pockets for the fare. . . .

BESSIE [*unbelieving*]. You came here for that?

HARRY [*surprised*]. What else would I want here? Five quid isn't much to ask for—once in sixteen years. [*Through his teeth with a sidelong look at* B.] And now I am ready to go—for my fare.

BESSIE [*clasping her hands*]. Whoever heard a man talk like this before! I can't believe you mean it.

HARRY. What? That I would go? You just try and see.

BESSIE [*disregarding him*]. Don't you care for any one? Didn't you ever want any one in the world to care for you?

HARRY. In the world! [*Boastful.*] There's hardly a place you can go in the world where you wouldn't find somebody that did care for Harry Hagberd. [*Pause.*] I'm not of the sort that go about skulking under false names.

BESSIE. Somebody—that means a woman.

HARRY. Well! And if it did?

BESSIE [*unsteadily*]. Oh, I see how it is. You get round them with your soft speeches, your promises, and then . . .

HARRY [*violently*]. Never!

BESSIE [*startled, steps back*]. Ah—you never . . .

HARRY [*calm*]. Never yet told a lie to a woman.

BESSIE. What lie?

HARRY. Why, the lie that comes glib to a man's tongue. None of that for me. I leave the sneaking off to them soft-spoken chaps you're thinking of. No! If you love me you take me. And if you take me—why, then, the capstan-song of deep-water ships is sure to settle it all some fine day.

BESSIE [*after a short pause, with effort*]. It's like your ships, then.

HARRY [*amused*]. Exactly, up to now. Or else I wouldn't be here in a silly fix.

BESSIE [*assumed indifference*]. Perhaps it's because you've never yet met—— [*Voice fails.*]

HARRY [*negligently*]. Maybe. And perhaps never shall. . . . What's the odds? It's the looking for a thing. . . . No matter. I love them all—ships and women. The scrapes they got me into, and the scrapes they got me out of—my word! I say, Miss Bessie, what are you thinking of?

BESSIE [*lifts her head*]. That you are supposed never to tell a lie.

HARRY. Never, eh? You wouldn't be that hard on a chap.

BESSIE [*recklessly*]. Never to a woman, I mean.

HARRY. Well, no. [*Serious.*] Never anything that matters. [*Aside.*] I don't seem to get any nearer to my railway fare. [*Leans wearily against the lamp-post with a far-off look.* BESSIE *to L. looks at him.*]

BESSIE. Now what are *you* thinking of?

HARRY [*turns his head; stares at* B.]. Well, I was thinking what a fine figure of a girl you are.

BESSIE [*looks away a moment*]. Is that true, or is it only one of them that don't matter?

HARRY [*laughing a little*]. No! No! That's true. Haven't you ever been told that before? The men . . .

BESSIE. I hardly speak to a soul from year's end to year's end. Father's blind. He don't like strangers, and he can't bear to think of me out of his call. Nobody comes near us much.

HARRY [*absent-minded*]. Blind—ah! of course.

BESSIE. For years and years . . .

HARRY [*commiserating*]. For years and years. In one of them hutches. You are a good daughter. [*Brightening up.*] A fine girl altogether. You seem the sort that makes a good chum to a man in a fix. And there's not a man in this whole town who found you out? I can hardly credit it, Miss Bessie. [B. *shakes her head.*] Man, I said! [*Contemptuous.*] A lot of tame rabbits in hutches I call them. . . . [*Breaks off.*] I say, when's the last train up to London? Can you tell me?

BESSIE [*gazes at him steadily*]. What for? You've no money.

HARRY. That's just it. [*Leans back against post again.*] Hard luck. [*Insinuating.*] But there was never a time in all my travels that a woman of the right sort did not turn up to help me out of a fix. I don't know why. It's perhaps because they know without telling that I love them all. [*Playful.*] I've almost fallen in love with you, Miss Bessie.

BESSIE [*unsteady laugh*]. Why! How you talk! You haven't even seen my face properly. [*One step towards* HARRY, *as if compelled.*]

HARRY [*bending forward gallantly*]. A little pale. It suits some. [*Puts out his hand, catches hold of* B.'s *arm. Draws her to him.*] Let's see. . . . Yes, it suits you. [*It's a moment before* B. *puts up her hands, palms out, and turns away her head.*]

BESSIE [*whispering*]. Don't. [*Struggles a little. Released, stands averted.*]

HARRY. No offence. [*Stands, back to audience, looking at* CAPT. H.'S *cottage.*]

BESSIE [*alone in front; faces audience; whispers*]. My voice—my figure—my heart—my face. . . .

[*A silence.* B.'S *face gradually lights up. Directly* HARRY *speaks, expression of hopeful attention.*]

HARRY [*from railings*]. The old man seems to have gone to sleep waiting for that to-morrow of his.

BESSIE. Come away. He sleeps very little.

HARRY [*strolls down*]. He has taken an everlasting jamming hitch round the whole business. [*Vexed.*] Cast it loose who may. [*Contemptuous exclamation.*] To-morrow. Pooh! It'll be just another mad to-day.

BESSIE. It's the brooding over his hope that's done it. People teased him so. It's his fondness for you that's troubled his mind.

HARRY. Aye. A confounded shovel on the head. The old man had always a queer way of showing his fondness for me.

BESSIE. A hopeful, troubled, expecting old man—left alone—all alone.

HARRY [*lower tone*]. Did he ever tell you what Mother died of?

BESSIE. Yes. [*A little bitter.*] From impatience.

HARRY [*makes a gesture with his arm; speaks vaguely but with feeling*]. I believe you have been very good to my old man. . . .

BESSIE [*tentative*]. Wouldn't you try to be a son to him?

HARRY [*angrily*]. No contradicting; is that it? You seem to know my dad pretty well. And so do I. He's dead nuts on having his own way—and I've been used to have my own too long. It's the deuce of a fix.

BESSIE. How could it hurt you not to contradict him for a while—and perhaps in time you would get used . . .

HARRY [*interrupts sulkily*]. I ain't accustomed to knuckle under. There's a pair of us. Hagberds both. I ought to be thinking of my train.

BESSIE [*earnestly*]. Why? There's no need. Let us get away up the road a little.

HARRY [*through his teeth*]. And no money for the fare. [*Looks up.*] Sky's come overcast. Black, too. It'll be a wild, windy night . . . to walk the high-road on. But I and wild nights are old friends wherever the free wind blows.

BESSIE [*entreating*]. No need. No need. [*Looks apprehensively at* HAGBERD'S *cottage. Takes a couple of steps up as if to draw* HARRY *further off.* HARRY *follows. Both stop.*]

HARRY [*after waiting*]. What about this to-morrow whim?

BESSIE. Leave that to me. Of course all his fancies are not mad. They aren't. [*Pause.*] Most people in this town would think what he had set his mind on quite sensible. If he ever talks to you of it, don't contradict him. It would—it would be dangerous.

HARRY [*surprised*]. What would he do?

BESSIE. He would—I don't know—something rash.

HARRY [*startled*]. To himself?

BESSIE. No. It'd be against you—I fear.

HARRY [*sullen*]. Let him.

BESSIE. Never. Don't quarrel. But perhaps he won't even try to talk to you of it. [*Thinking aloud.*] Who knows what I can do with him in a week! I can, I can, I can—I must.

HARRY. Come—what's this sensible notion of his that I mustn't quarrel about?

BESSIE [*turns to* HARRY, *calm, forcible*]. If I make him once see that you've come back, he will be as sane as you or I. All his mad notions will be gone. But that other is quite sensible. And you mustn't quarrel over it.

[*Moves up to back of stage.* HARRY *follows a little behind, away from audience.*]

HARRY'S VOICE [*calm*]. Let's hear what it is.

[*Voices cease. Action visible as before.* HARRY *steps back and walks hastily down.* BESSIE, *at his elbow, follows with her hands clasped.*]

[*Loud burst of voice.*]

HARRY [*raving to and fro*]. No! Expects me—a home. Who wants his home? . . . What I want

is hard work, or an all-fired racket, or more room than there is in the whole of England. Expects me! A man like me—for his rotten money—there ain't enough money in the world to turn me into a blamed tame rabbit in a hutch. [*He stops suddenly before* BESSIE, *arms crossed on breast. Violently.*] Don't you see it?

BESSIE [*terrified, stammering faintly*]. Yes. Yes. Don't look at me like this. [*Sudden scream.*] Don't quarrel with him. He's mad!

HARRY [*headlong utterance*]. Mad! Not he. He likes his own way. Tie me up by the neck here. Here! Ha! Ha! Ha! [*Louder.*] And the whole world is not a bit too big for me to spread my elbows in, I can tell you—what's your name—Bessie. [*Rising scorn.*] Marry! Wants me to marry and settle. . . . [*Scathingly.*] And as likely as not he has looked out the girl, too—dash my soul. Talked to you about it—did he? And do you happen to know the Judy—may I ask?

[*Window in* CAPT. H.'S *cottage runs up. They start and stand still.*]

CAPT. H. [*above, begins slowly*]. A grinning information fellow from a crazy town. [*Voice changes.*] Bessie, I see you . . .

BESSIE [*shrilly*]. Captain Hagberd! Say nothing. You don't understand. For heaven's sake don't.

CAPT. H. Send him away this minute, or I will tell Harry. They know nothing of Harry in this crazy town. Harry's coming home to-morrow. Do you hear? One day more!

[*Silence.*]

HARRY [*mutters*]. Well!—he *is* a character.

CAPT. H. [*chuckles softly*]. Never you fear! The boy shall marry you. [*Sudden anger.*] He'll have to. I'll make him. Or, if not—[*Furious*]—I'll cut him off with a shilling, and leave everything to you. Jackanapes! Let him starve!

[*Window rumbles down.*]

HARRY [*slowly*]. So it's you—the girl. It's you! Now I begin to see. . . . By heavens, you have a heart as soft as your woman's voice.

BESSIE [*half averted, face in hands*]. You see! Don't come near me.

HARRY [*makes a step towards her*]. I must have another look at your pale face.

BESSIE [*turns unexpectedly and pushes him with both hands;* HARRY *staggers back and stands still; fiercely*]. Go away.

HARRY [*watching her*]. Directly. But women always had to get me out of my scrapes. I am a beggar now, and you must help me out of my scrape.

BESSIE [*who at the word "beggar" had begun fumbling in the pocket of her dress, speaks wildly*]. Here it is. Take it. Don't look at me. Don't speak to me!

HARRY [*swaggers up under the lamp: looks at coin in his palm*]. Half-a-quid . . . My fare!

BESSIE [*hands clenched*]. Why are you still here?

HARRY. Well, you *are* a fine figure of a girl. My word. I've a good mind to stop—for a week.

BESSIE [*pain and shame*]. Oh! . . . What are you waiting for? If I had more money I would give it all, all. I would give everything I have to make you

go—to make you forget you had ever heard my voice and seen my face. [*Covers face with hands.*]

HARRY [*sombre, watches her*]. No fear! I haven't forgotten a single one of you in the world. Some've given me more than money. No matter. You can't buy me in—and you can't buy yourself out . . .

[*Strides towards her. Seizes her arms. Short struggle.* BESSIE *gives way. Hair falls loose.* HARRY *kisses her forehead, cheeks, lips; then releases her.* BESSIE *staggers against railings.*]

[*Exit* HARRY; *measured walk without haste.*]

SCENE V

BESSIE. CAPT. HAGBERD *at window.*

BESSIE [*staring eyes, hair loose, back against railings; calls out*]: Harry! [*Gathers up her skirts and runs a little way.*] Come back, Harry. [*Staggers forward against lamp-post.*] Harry! [*Much lower.*] Harry! [*In a whisper.*] Take me with you. [*Begins to laugh, at first faintly, then louder.*]

[*Window rumbles up, and* CAPT. H.'S *chuckle mingles with* BESSIE'S *laughter which abruptly stops.*]

CAPT. H. [*goes on chuckling; speaks cautiously*]. Is he gone yet, that information fellow? Do you see him anywhere, my dear?

BESSIE [*low and stammering*]. N-no, no! [*Totters away from lamp-post.*] I don't see him.

CAPT. H. [*anxious*]. A grinning vagabond, my dear. Good girl. It's you who drove him away. Good girl.

[*Stage gradually darkens.*]

BESSIE. Go in; be quiet! You have done harm enough.

CAPT. H. [*alarmed*]. Why? Do you hear him yet, my dear?

BESSIE [*sobs, drooping against the railings*]. No! No! I don't. I don't hear him any more.

CAPT. H. [*triumphant*]. Now we shall be all right, my dear, till our Harry comes home to-morrow. [*Affected gurgling laugh.*]

BESSIE [*distracted*]. Be quiet. Shut yourself in. You will make me mad. [*Losing control of herself, repeats with rising inflection.*] You make me mad. [*With despair.*] There is no to-morrow! [*Sinks to ground near middle railings. Low sobs.*]

[*Stage darkens perceptibly.*]

CAPT. H. [*above, in a voice suddenly dismayed and shrill*]. What! What do you say, my dear? No to-morrow? [*Broken, very feebly.*] No—to-morrow? [*Window runs down.*]

CARVIL [*heard within, muffled bellowing*]. Bessie—Bessie—Bessie—Bessie—— [*At the first call* BESSIE *springs up and begins to stumble blindly towards the door. A faint flash of lightning, followed by a very low rumble of thunder.*] You!—Bessie!

CURTAIN